

MERRY ENGLAND.

JUNE, 1883.

Monuments of Merry England.

ST. ALBAN'S ABBEY.

THERE are older remains in England than those of the great Abbey of St. Alban, but none with local associations carrying the mind back so far into the remoteness of the Past. The very bricks of the Abbey-church speak history, for they tell of the Roman city of which they were once a part. Standing on the tower, you might almost throw a stone into the field in which a remnant of the walls of Verulam still indicates the site of the populous town—in the palmy days of the Roman occupation of Britain a centre of trade and military power, the birthplace of British-born Roman citizens, the scene in which their lives were passed and their ambitions had play. The great highway, afterwards called Watling Street, which ran southward to the sea and northward to the more distant country of the barbarians—as the Romans, like the English later on, called those who did not want their civilization—at this spot, and for many miles on either side, still keeps its original line as when it resounded to the march of Roman soldiers, or when caravans toiled over it towards the city, laden with Roman merchandise. The scrap of ruin in the field, the old road, the bricks of the minster, are all the outward evidences which Time has spared of that busy town. Nor, for the most part, has History preserved more than the

driest details concerning the fortunes of that hive of human life. Facts so meagre relating to times so far removed, would in the ordinary course of things have long ago lost their power to touch the imagination; like wine, they would have become flavourless through too great age. Who but antiquarians would have lingered about the site of Verulam but for the one incident in its history which raised its ashes to a renewed life, and perpetuated its renown, as the sucker that has itself developed into a tree preserves the memory of the worn-out trunk from which it grew?

Late in the third century there lived in Verulam a citizen named Alban. From his name he is judged to have been a Roman, at least by descent. He was a man of position and of some influence; and, having travelled to Rome and seen something of the world, was large and tolerant in his views. It was natural that such a man, Pagan though he was, should regard with disfavour the persecution with which, under the reign of Diocletian, the Christians of Britain were for the first time threatened. When, therefore, the priest Amphibalus sought to escape the newly made laws, he found a hiding-place in the house of Alban, who at first regarded his misfortune, and soon his teaching, with sympathy. Not long after his conversion, Alban was warned that the retreat of the priest had been discovered. Hastily changing clothes with his guest, whom he implored to escape, his life being the more valuable of the two, Alban, dressed in the *caracalla* or long rough coat by which Amphibalus was known, confronted the search-party, who hurried him away and brought him before the Proconsul. It was soon found that the wearer of the *caracalla* was not Amphibalus, but Alban the well-known citizen. In regard to the priest, Alban would answer nothing. Concerning himself he was less reserved. He avowed his Christianity, and proved it by resisting persuasion and enduring torture; and by accepting sentence of death rather than drop a few grains of incense on

the flame burning before the altar of the god. Followed by a great crowd, he was led to the hill outside the city, and there beheaded. Having been the first in this island to shed his blood for the Christian Faith, Alban became identified in a particular way with the fortunes of Christianity. When, ten years after his death, the tenets of the persecuted religion found acceptance with the Emperor of Rome himself, there ensued peace for the Church and public honours for her martyrs. The palaces and temples of pagan Rome became transformed into Christian churches, and in them were enshrined and publicly venerated the bodies of the martyrs hitherto immured in the passages or under the altars of the catacombs. What happened in Rome, happened by a spontaneous impulse wherever the Christian religion had spread, even in the far-off regions of Britain. Here, as elsewhere, the martyrs' blood had been the seed of the Church, whose doctrines had sometimes been furthered more by the deaths than they might have been by the lives of her children. In the very act of suffering, Alban had gained disciples among those who had witnessed the event of his passion. Such were they who honourably buried his remains. More than a thousand persons in Verulam alone are said by ancient writers to have followed his example, and to have sealed their Faith with their blood. And it is likely enough that there were still larger numbers who, if they had not the courage to endanger their lives, at least sympathized with Alban and his followers, and were restive under the sense that they might use their free-will only under similar penalties. When, therefore, the day of triumph for the Church came, the memory of Alban shared her glory ; his body was venerated by the multitude as that of a saint ; the hill of his execution became holy ground ; a great church arose upon it dedicated to his name ; thither his remains were brought, and thither journeyed from far and near pilgrims of many nations, drawn by his renown and the fame of miracles wrought at his shrine.

In the personal history of Alban, the triumph of truth and the rehabilitation of his character followed upon erroneous judgment and unjust condemnation, with a closeness sufficient to satisfy his own contemporaries. But we cannot track the history of his shrine without being continually reminded that the Church Militant, even after it has triumphed, has ever to encounter fresh enemies, and to sustain checks and reversals of fortune, and even defeats, that to generation after generation must often have appeared as final. A hundred years had not elapsed from Alban's death, before Verulam, within sight of the walls of which stood the church on the hill dedicated to the name of her famous citizen, had become one of the strongholds of the Pelagian heresy ; and the testimony to the Church's cause borne by Alban when he endured martyrdom had to be repeated in a different way by Germain, Bishop of Auxerre in France, who was sent by Pope Celestine I. from his diocese, in 429, to preach in Britain against the teachings of Pelagius. The opponents of SS. Alban and Germain differed widely from each other. An antagonism to the Church was the only point in common between the followers of Pelagius and the ministers of Diocletian. But Germain, when he gained his controversial victory at Verulam over the disciples of the heresiarch, could publicly repair to the church of St. Alban, and there give thanks for his victory to God and the tutelary saint. It was during this visit that Germain caused the tomb of Alban to be opened, and deposited with the bones of the saint the most treasured of his own possessions—a box containing relics of apostles and martyrs. It had been his habit to carry these relics with him wherever he went ; and their miraculous power had been displayed only a few hours before, when a blind child, to whose eyes the Bishop had applied them, was restored to sight. These, by way of thank-offering to St. Alban, and as a token that the same Faith animated them both, Germain now laid within the coffin of the Saint of Verulam, taking in return

some of the martyr's dust, which he carried away with him to his own country.

German's repose was short, however. In a few years the Pelagian heresy gained new strength in Britain, and the Bishop left his diocese a second time on a mission to these shores. But the day for peaceful controversy was past, and the heresy was eradicated from our island only by the torrent of barbarism that now deluged the failing empire of Rome, making easy conquests of her deserted provinces. Verulam was the scene of one of the final stands made by the British power against Saxon encroachments, and with the fall of the Britons, about 449, Verulam sank into decay, never to rise from its ruins. The church of St. Alban shared in the destruction of the city, and the devastation that laid Verulam waste marked the progress of the invaders wherever they came. The British race disappeared. Its language gave place to a strange dialect. Its landmarks were wiped out ; its cities destroyed. Its religion was effaced, and the ruins of Christian churches were the only signs that remained to show where Christianity had once been taught. The British race did not come back. Its language has been locked ever since in the Welsh mountains. The old civil order was not restored. One institution alone, of all those which had formerly flourished, in the course of years revived in its old form, as unchanged as if no time had intervened. When Augustine and his monks landed in Kent, in 595, they brought back with them the old religion as it had previously existed with all its greater and lesser features—the Godhead of Christ, the Redemption of man, the seven Sacraments, the monastic system, the invocation of saints, and the consequent veneration of their relics. Christianity, once more planted by the missionaries, struck root in familiar soil, and quietly assumed over the heathen Saxon the influence with which it had subdued the generation that had persecuted Alban. Of all the old local traditions that raised their heads to twine about

the kindred teaching, none were at length more magnificently honoured than those that lingered among the ruins of Verulam. They had suffered a long neglect : 500 years had elapsed from the death of St. Alban, 344 from the fall of Verulam, and 200 from the re-introduction of Christianity by Saint Augustine, before Offa, King of Mercia, was prompted, about the year 793, to undertake that work which has familiarized to every passer-by a name that would have been interesting to none but historical students, had it depended for remembrance only upon the victories, the power, and the crimes with which it was associated.

It ought not to cause astonishment if, in the course of obscure centuries, some outgrowth of fable became interwoven with the actual circumstances connected with the finding of the body of St. Alban, and the foundation of the Benedictine Abbey dedicated to his name in Offa's reign. Nor at so great a distance of time, and in a matter of such slight consequence, is it easy to feel profoundly interested as to the true or fabulous character of the supernatural evidences recorded in old histories as having preceded and accompanied the discovery. Did a heavenly messenger appear to Offa while he lay in the uneasy sleep of those who are racked with remorse, and direct him to take out of the earth the body of the blessed proto-martyr of Britain, and place it in a fitting shrine? Or was it to the prompting of the still small voice urging him to make reparation for his sins and provision for his soul, that the Abbey of St. Alban owed its origin? Is the tradition which existed in the time of Roger of Wendover, and which he undoubtedly records in his history, the bare account of what took place?—that Offa, awaking from sleep, sent for Humbert, the Archbishop of Lichfield, and told him what he had seen and heard; that with him and the Suffragan Bishops the king journeyed from Bath, his capital, in pious pilgrimage to the ruins of Verulam, there to search for the Saint's body, concerning the

fate of which all remembrance had died out ; that these pilgrims, whose train had been swelled in their progress by a great concourse of people of both sexes, were guided in their search at Verulam by a supernatural light to the hill called Holmhurst, the scene of Alban's death ; that, beneath the spot where the light stood still, the diggers struck upon a wooden chest, in which were found the bones of the saint, and the box of relics deposited with them by St. Germain of Auxerre more than 300 years before. Or was the discovery the result of some matter-of-fact accident, such as those of which we read every day ; by which, for example, Etruscan coffins, with perfect skeletons of men and women who died thousands instead of hundreds of years ago, have been unearthed ; or buried dwelling-houses with frescoes on their walls undamaged by the sepulture of centuries ; or antique statues which have survived unhurt their overturn in the sacking of a town, and lain for ages beneath the pile of broken ruins, and which, now recovered in the course of excavations, can by comparison of time and place, and preserved records and local traditions, be identified with every confidence as the famous work of some famous sculptor of ancient days ? Let such questions be resolved by those who are perplexed by them. The great facts of history are not altered even if a fable finds here or there its way among them. The history of Rome is not a figment divested of all interest because Romulus may not have been suckled by a wolf ; neither is the history of St. Alban's Abbey and its shrine less wonderful because some of the early stories told in connexion with its relics may be nothing more than legends. Any impeachment of them remains to be proved, however ; and, meanwhile, we are not willing to part with our old legends, any more than is the Roman, as he watches the caged wolves, mementos of the origin of his city, pacing behind the bars in the cave on the Capitoline Hill.

King Offa lived to see St. Alban's relics enclosed in a rich shrine, and the shrine deposited in the church of his new foundation. For the newly founded Abbey he obtained exceptional privileges from Rome ; and, endowing it himself with various lands, he left it at his death fairly launched upon that career which was to be one of increasing renown for seven centuries and a half. Throughout the whole of that period the shrine from time to time makes its appearance in the annals of the Abbey. Under the date 930, it becomes the subject of a transparent fiction—worthless as history, but with a quaint flavour of its own—wherein it is related how in that year the Danes wrecked the Abbey, carried off the relics, and deposited them with a community of Black Monks dwelling at Owense ; how Brother Egwin, the Sacristan, travelled thither from St. Alban's in search of them, having been directed by St. Alban himself, who in sleep had revealed to him the place of their detention ; and how after a variety of altogether unnecessary stratagems, precautions and explanations, he succeeded in secretly abstracting them one night from their resting-place in the church at Owense, and in restoring them to his own monastery. This fiction, however, is not even of native growth. Matthew Paris, writing in the thirteenth century, while including it in the chronicles of his Abbey admits that neither record nor tradition respecting it existed in his time at St. Alban's, and that he was indebted for it to a Danish source.

In the story, however, of the pretended transfer of the relics to Ely, in the year 1045, we are treading upon securer ground. Edward the Confessor reigned in England, Aelfric II. at St. Alban's, when the Danes once more threatened invasion. The prospect of war set the country arming, concealing its treasures, and fortifying its strong places. Abbot Aelfric's greatest concern was for the relics. In the presence of witnesses bound to secrecy, he caused them to be privately

removed by night from the shrine in the church, and deposited in an opening of the wall behind the altar in one of the private chapels of the monastery—that of St. Nicholas. About the same time, having obtained the consent of the abbot and monks of Ely, he publicly committed to their keeping those things which were of most value in St. Alban's Abbey. Amongst these was part of the shrine containing, not now indeed St. Alban's bones, but those of some forgotten monk, dug up out of the graveyard for the occasion. Aelfric hoped that by means of the publicity with which everything of value had been sent away, the invaders, if they should come to St. Alban's, would learn from common rumour that there was nothing left worth looking for; and he felt satisfied that at Ely the treasures were safe from the Danes, for the monastery, being surrounded by fens and marshes, could easily be defended against the advance of an enemy.

The war-cloud, however, passed over without breaking. The death of the Danish king—who, having missed his footing while embarking, was drowned in sight of his fleet—saved England for that time from invasion. Warlike preparations ceased, and Abbot Aelfric sent messengers to Ely that they might bring back the property of his Abbey. To his consternation, the abbot and monks of Ely at first refused to restore anything. The chronicler of St. Alban's does not state under what misunderstanding they laboured, or by what argument the refusal was supported; but it was obstinately adhered to, and, in one respect, evaded even the anger of King Edward. For though, in deference to his commands, the gold and silver, the sacred vessels, and the shrine itself were after a time returned, the monks of Ely—so runs the chronicle—retained the false relics which they had received and sent back others in their place. It was in vain that Aelfric now admitted the ruse he had practised; he had to undergo the additional humiliation of being disbelieved, and of knowing that he had laid the founda-

tion of a rival claim to the ownership of the coveted relics. He did not live to see that claim abandoned. Not until the reign of Henry II., more than a century later, did the convent of Ely formally renounce its pretensions to be considered the possessor of the true relics of St. Alban.

This result was finally brought about by the diplomacy of Pope Adrian IV.; but the real relics had long before been taken from the wall in St. Nicholas' Chapel and restored to their old position in the church. And there through succeeding centuries they remained, the silent witnesses of many changes—changes of dynasty, changes of race, changes in modes of thought, in methods of warfare, changes of dress and manners. They saw the Abbey-church itself, which had weathered the storms of 300 years, replaced, between 1070 when it was commenced, and 1115 when it was finished, by the more massive structure we now behold, built of the tiles drawn from the ruins of the city in which Alban had lived and moved in the flesh. The very shrine in which the relics reposed was to be many times renewed, adorned, divested of its wealth, and enriched again. We read how Geoffrey de Gorham, the sixteenth abbot, converted the gold and silver, prepared for a new shrine, into money for the poor during a year of scarcity, and how he lived to see abundance return, and the new shrine completed. How, again, Ralph, his successor, stripped the shrine of all the plates of solid gold, and of the jewels also, and precious stones, that he might purchase the vill of Brentfield, the value of which amounted to twenty-four marks; and how the rent of the purchase was applied to repair the buildings and restore the shrine, by Robert, the eighteenth abbot, and finally by Symond, the nineteenth, who realized his ambition of leaving it completed and adorned with the treasures he had been collecting for the purpose through many years.

On which part of the shrine would the eye of the pilgrim

linger most? Would it be on the design and carving of the pedestal; on the jewelled canopy lined with crystal stones; or on the narrative told on the golden sides of the outer chest containing the sacred bones? In every age, men, women and children have loved a story; and here, unfolded in a series of pictures, was one which from that place spoke with a two-fold eloquence, and invested with a heightened interest the ruins in yonder field, the site of the ancient city, the river that ran in the valley as of old, and this hill, from which the massive tower of the Abbey-church rose as a landmark, visible for miles and miles around.

Let us give rein to fancy and guess at some of the different subjects of the series. In the first, Alban the respected citizen pays his homage to the gods in the pagan temple. In the next he is at home, whither approaches in his caracalla, with arms outstretched in supplication, and head half-turned to see if he is still pursued, Amphibalus, the fugitive priest. Here Alban, seated at the feet of the caracalla-coated stranger, listens to the new teaching that falls from the lips of the priest, who points heavenward. This next is the complement of the foregoing—Alban is baptized by Amphibalus. These are they again; but the tranquillity of their intercourse has fled. A messenger, with excited gesture, is detailing evil news, and Alban urges Amphibalus to escape. What is this? Soldiers in the house of Alban! And who is it they seize clad in the caracalla? The coat is that of the priest who has fled; but the long hair and beard are those of Alban, who has changed clothes with him. Here is Alban once more; he is being scourged; and, in an interval for breathing-time for the executioners, the judge points angrily towards the statue of Apollo, before which a light is burning. Alban, naked and bleeding, keeps his head turned the other way. There is no concession there. Now we are in the fields, through which winds the little river Ver, and there are the

crowds that precede and follow Alban, who has been condemned to die, to the hill of execution. The bridge by which they must all cross the river is far down the stream. Alban, standing with joined hands and eyes raised to heaven, prays that his road to martyrdom may be shortened. And while he is still praying and looking up, lo! the waters of the river have already divided at his feet, leaving a wide and dry passage across; and Heraclius, the headsman, has thrown away his sword, and fallen on his knees, crying out that he too is a Christian. This next scene is that of the martyrdom: a new executioner has been found; the blow has been struck; the headsman's eyes have dropped out of their sockets; Alban's head rolls upon the hill, and some of the bystanders dip cloths and sponges in the martyr's blood. Here, last of all, are men at work upon a half-built church, rising to Alban's memory; while the Saint aloft looks down upon the workers, and smiles and blesses them.

So, through St. Alban's shrine, did these events, for twelve hundred years after they had occurred, exercise a spell over all who pondered on them. But the religion for which Alban died was to suffer such another eclipse in the country watered by his blood as that which the invading Saxons had brought about, and the glory of his shrine was to pass away. Did the ingenuity, one feels inclined to ask, which had preserved St. Alban's relics from the ravages of barbarians, fail the monks when the despoilers were the obsequious servants of a corrupt king? Is it not possible that, built into a wall, or buried in the church itself, or secretly preserved in some foreign resting-place, these celebrated relics may be discovered once again? Such possibilities seem to diminish in presence of that list of pensions which the last abbot, Richard Boreman, and his monks accepted in liquidation of their claims. There was no martyr's blood shed here in the time of Henry VIII., as there was at Reading and the Charterhouse. The monastery became the property of Sir Thomas Lee, being part of

the price of his acquiescence in his wife's complaisance with the King, who, according to Udal, "loved her too well." Lee immediately began to dismantle the monastery, and with its materials to enlarge the convent of Sopwell, another of his acquisitions, which he designed for his residence. The church, after lying neglected and disused for some years, was sold for the sum of £400 to the townspeople, who bought it for their parish church. So that, when Mary came to the throne and wished to restore the Abbey to its pristine state, she found the community dispersed, the monastery levelled, the church alienated, and her idea therefore impracticable. In the hands of its new possessors, the minster underwent a rapid transformation. The western part was made to serve the purpose of a parish church. The end east of the site of the shrine, containing the Lady-chapel and the ante-chapel, was bricked off, and used for various purposes. Part of it was made a public thoroughfare, part was used as a grammar-school, and the remainder as a playground for the school-children. When, ten years ago, in furtherance of the work of the restoration of the Abbey-church which had been taken in hand, the filling-up of the archways between this eastern extremity and the remainder of the church, was pulled down, some two thousand fragments of Purbeck marble, curiously carved, were found among the rubble. They were collected, and when pieced together formed a structure which coincided exactly with the limits of the ancient pedestal, traces of which had never been completely obliterated from its original site.

There it stands now, the pedestal dating from early in the fourteenth century, the bearer of the relics that dated from a thousand years before. There is a spectral look about it as it stands in the centre of that raised and darkened space, shut in by the lofty high-altar screen on one side, on another by the watching-loft, on a third by the new brickwork that walls-off the Lady-chapel, on the fourth by the grill. We see

it first through the grill, and as we peer at it a feeling of awe comes over us. As we mount the steps and, pushing open the gate, enter the Saint's chapel and approach to examine the design and the gaps in the cracked structure, our tendency is to walk softly, as if fearful to break the intense silence that hangs over the place. The loose blocks of oak that form the stairs of the watching-loft startle us by their noisy unsteadiness as we climb them. And now, from the aperture in the loft, we look down upon that battered and discoloured monument of the Past, upon which, in its heyday brightness, the guarding eyes of many a watching monk have rested. How quiet the spot is! No sound from the outer world pierces these old church walls. No footstep echoes along the aisles. The grey of evening has come on, and in the twilight the associations linked with the place rise before our minds. If the Past were wont to repeat itself in shadows, ghostly pilgrims, kings, queens, stalwart warriors, noble ladies, the rich and the poor, the sick, the lame, and the blind, of all degrees, would, at an hour like this, and in so great a stillness, pass in again at that gate opposite, and, lingering awhile about the shrine in prayer, presently go their way. With mute eagerness, a crowd of monks, with concern upon their faces, would hurry in, preceding others, bearing the dying abbot, John IV., in obedience to his last command that they should carry him before the shrine. Here, between his dying gasps, his ghostly lips would shape the words: "O, holy Alban! whom I have loved and addressed as my best aid, as I have lived by thy help, so, O glorious saint, defend me from the pains of hell!" Or another group might be seen advancing from the doorway in the grill—two figures, fresh from the battle-field, both in armour; one strong of limb and fierce of countenance, the other bearing his war-dress awkwardly, a crown encircling his helmet, and having in his face a childlike innocence. Poor King Henry VI., and his rival, the Duke of York! Entering

hand in hand, they would kneel together at the shrine in seeming friendship—the friendship of the conqueror and his captive, of the vulture and his prey. And they too would pass away ; as they did in the flesh to the fortunes that awaited them—a death in the battle-field for the strong man ; and for the weak king, victories and defeats, the loss of his power, of his crown, of his only son ; a violent death, and happiness in Heaven.

Last scene of all—but no ! let us not dwell on that ! Let the fury and the sacrilegious rage that accompanied the destruction of St. Alban's shrine go unrecalled. The fragments of the pedestal thus tenderly pieced together are another testimony that the descendants of the iconoclasts would, if they were able, undo some part at least of their fathers' work. They are animated, not only here but everywhere, by the spirit of restoration ; and the monkish artists are their models.

R. B. SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

Lovely and Pleasant in their Lives.

WE have lately had, in the course of literary biography, several manifestations of English interiors which might go far towards demolishing the national ideal of the home, if that ideal were not happily, like Shelley's cloud, indestructible, and triumphant over its own cenotaph. No reference is here made to sad and scandalous examples—to those "revelations" which from time to time betray exceptional miseries or peculiar evils. Exceptional and wonderful events, persons, and conditions, are the invariable theme of comment, of observation, of imagination; we may hear about them whenever we will. But it has not often happened that the enormous secret of every day, the mystery of commonplace, is opened to us. For it can scarcely be opened except by accident. The secret would lose its secrecy if revelation were at any time expected; and that accident has generally been the accident of some kind of literary fame. Such an accident shed retrospective light into the absolute secrecy and seclusion of the Brontë household, revealing the time before the public had begun to have any part in that silent home; and such another accident has made manifest the thoughts of the heart of Carlyle's wife. Such chances are lucky, in so much as they show us what is so pre-eminently interesting; but they are melancholy in their effect of disillusion. We would all fain go on believing that the secret which lies all about us, and so close to us, and which is guarded so well, is a happy secret and a secret of love. As has been said, we shall probably not cease to believe it. We shall be always reluctant to be cognizant of places which are close to us, and out of reach by reason of that very nearness, out of reach of any benevolent reforms, not to be

touched by the efforts of societies who bring their flowers and their little lessons in manners within poorer walls.

Such households as that of the Carlyles need a course of discipline which there is no one to administer. Who shall teach a bitter and ill-bred man and a woman whose liveliness takes the form of easy scorn of her neighbours, how to live in loveliness and pleasantness with one another? There are no schools for this knowledge, there are no teachers. But it might be worth considering how far the education of public opinion, which—inasmuch as it *is* public and not private opinion—can be reached and taught, would react upon the secret and unreachable homes of the commonplace. If there were in the world of England a higher tone of manners; if more loveliness were expected from the middle-class man and more pleasantness from the middle-class woman, there would arise a tribunal of opinion which would not indeed judge them—for their unseen actions are out of the reach of its judgments—but before which the man and the woman might judge themselves. We all live in the presence of some ideal; if the ideal is our own and judges us from our own conscience, we shall live altogether nobly; if it is the creation of the public expectation with regard to our character and conduct, we shall live not quite nobly perhaps, but still prettily. We shall at least conform, and do secret and unwitnessed actions with the profitable vanity of meriting the approval which is all about us in the tone of thought, “in the air.”

Now my complaint is that, although, as I said at the outset, there is an indestructible ideal of the English *intérieur*, that ideal is not explicit enough to have a force which should be executive. It is vague; it is in effect rather a belief than an ideal; it does not, certainly, impel to prettiness, and prettiness is the chief thing lacking in these homes of Merry England. Public opinion is pleased in the belief that the great commonplace life hides a secret of happiness and affection; but it has

not formulated the rule which might put the order of loveliness and pleasantness where we are obliged to suspect that it does not now exist.

For it is no wonder if a few of us become suspicious. Literary biography, with its accidents, has betrayed so much that may well make us uneasy. In the case of the Carlyles there was evidently a certain capacity for prettiness in the wife. When she is ill and tender, and not playing the intolerable part of a clever woman and pouring ready-made scorn upon her fellow-creatures, she writes with a touch of grace which seems to show that she might have had—if she had judged herself before a public opinion of high tone—the pleasure and the vanity of leading a life of loveliness and pleasantness. Ordering herself before such a tribunal, she would assuredly not have taunted her husband with her own superfluity in the world, and would not have written coolly to his friends about the disagreeableness of marriage, or about his “accursed flannel shirts” which she had to mend, or about the “rows” which ensued upon a difference of opinion in the *tête-à-tête* of conjugal existence. We have glimpses of lovelier things in her, hints that she might have learnt how to exchange with those she loved those indeliberate flatteries which move true natures to deserve, and meet, and overpass them; that she might have been a polite woman, instead of what she was. As for her husband, it may be that pride made all such happy and sweet vanities as accompany a conformity to high public opinion impossible to him. For conceit and pride are the most direct enemies of such gentle vanity, and Carlyle evidently committed the capital sin of independence during his whole life.

Probably a number of the new reformers would explain the ugly ways of such couples as the Carlyles, by the absence of art from their households. But it appears doubtful whether men and women who do not live by admiration would be any the better for having about them more than the ordinary and

almost inevitable beauties of the world. "What wouldst thou see which thou hast not here?" asks the Imitation. "Behold the elements; out of these all things are made." The people of whom I am writing have not learnt to admire the elements. "Men scarcely know how beautiful fire is," says Shelley. But neither do they know how beautiful is light, or water, or a handful of earth. The influences of art are, no doubt, strong; but if a woman has no apprehension of the loveliness of the forms, lines, colours, and expressions of a child—and vulgar women are obviously without such sensibility—she would hardly be the better for a reform in her wall-paper or the shapes of her household earthenware. Mrs. Carlyle did not, assuredly, live by admiration; and it may be doubted whether her life would have been improved even if she had known better than to gum disconnected prints from the illustrated papers over the leaves of a screen—"the beautifullest and cleverest screen that was ever made," as her unhappy husband declares after her death, in the tardy politeness of his penitence. Art would hardly have succeeded in making habitual respect take the place of the habit of scorn.

The ugliness of the Carlyles' relations to one another was due to certain forms of melancholy, and if Pessimism is to increase, we must fear that public opinion will not help us to a reform; it will not offer an ideal of gaiety to the study of members of English homes. Carlyle and his wife were the most melancholy human beings whose thoughts have ever been revealed. They taught each other sadness; theirs was a kind of passion and compassion (albeit the compassion had little tenderness in it), which multiplied each other as one mirror and another that stand face to face. In contemplating so terrible a relation between two human souls, I seek in my horror for an antithesis to the mournful egotism of modern Pessimism. And I find it in another time; I find it in conditions of public opinion which exacted politeness, not

only in the face of gloomy life, but even in the face of violent death. It is of Sir Thomas More that I am thinking—who jested on the scaffold steps and at the block. Not because he was cynically insensible to his own supreme moment. It was solemn enough to him; but he evidently held that he had no right to impose his own solemnity upon others. They were not going to die, and he respected the natural lightness of their hearts with a respect more heroically polite than the respect which we all pay—for nothing human can refuse it—to sorrow and tears.

“Lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in death they were not divided.” Between the unhappy couple whose secrets are thus made known to us, death came as the worst of divisions, the cruellest—the separation that lies between the dead, injured, and neglected creature, unforgiving and uncaring, because silent and sealed up in silence, and the unfortunate whose remorse pierces his breast too late. To the lovely and pleasant such a division as that cannot come. Anything but that. For to them sorrow takes another form—the form of that “harrowing praise,” murmured by the dying wife in Coventry Patmore’s divine ode:

And so we sate, within the low sun’s rays,
You whispering to me, for your voice was weak,
Your harrowing praise.

The other revelation, made also by literary accident, was made long ago; nevertheless the two homes were contemporary. In the case of the Brontës, too, we must ask that public opinion should pronounce definitely—not in criticism of manners, this time, but in protection of martyrs. Generous, young, and gracious creatures were there immured in a solitude so absolute that they lost the faculty of communication. They died erect, at their daily work, because they would not tell their pains, isolated in the very throes of death. In thinking of that awful house at Haworth, I ask myself by

what combination of customs and traditions, social and religious, it happened that human beings were caused, and permitted, to be born and to live and die in a home that was a charnel-house. It stood on the brink of graves, and its inmates obviously died blood-poisoned—the mother, the two little girls, then, one by one, brother and sister after sister. How did the Haworth parsonages of the world become possible? What misunderstanding has done it—what mistake?

And yet there is hope in the fact that some change of tone is insensibly, but certainly, taking place. Public opinion has begun to exact more courtesy and refinement than it can possibly have exacted in the days when “Mrs. Caudle’s Lectures” were considered funny, or anything except loathsome. Vulgarity has ceased to be precious for its own sake. This should augur at least a lifting-up of that general public ideal which is “in the air;” and if the lifting-up continues we may look for the silent tribunal of public opinion which is to judge and reward sweet manners and make homes merry in England. It is also evident that public opinion would hardly endure now a Haworth Parsonage, and would hardly suffer those who are young, and have the capacity for happiness and love, to be sacrificed to aged insensibility and to bitter meagre duties. Whatever the little Renaissance now taking place may have of evil, it has this of good—it recognizes joy and nature. So the time may still come, when the interest of the commonplace into which we desire to look may no longer be a painful interest, and when the literary revelation of its close and constant mysteries may be a revelation, not of Chelsea quarrels or of Haworth sorrows, but of a sweetness flattering to our old beliefs.

ALICE MEYNELL.

A Doubtful Parishioner.

I.

WALTON-IN-THE-WOOD is five miles from the nearest railway-station; and though few of its inhabitants have not by this time seen a train, and only one, "Deaf Tom" to wit, has not heard, coming over the woods in still summer weather, the deep panting of the infrequent steam-engine—still there is as much sense of leisure and of retirement about the little village as if Sir Isambard had never laid down that endless vista of rail at Ellerton, the nearest market-town. The Ellerton people, it is true, come in brakes now and again to make holiday in the woods, and at times a picnic party penetrates all the way from Upton—a place regarded by the villagers as the capital of England, but credited by the impartial geographer with no greater importance than that of being the capital of the county in which is situate Walton-in-the-Wood. By the Cockney tourist the village has never been invaded; consequently it has no modern "hotel," but a good old country inn, with a blooming barmaid, whose cheeks need no paint other than that which Nature prodigally puts upon them. The Tory member for the county, addressing his constituents in the tap-room at the last election, referred to "The Royal Oak" as "this great centre of social life," a definition which the vicar, who occupied the chair, endorsed with a hearty "Hear, hear;" and ever since that day the little knot of village worthies, who assemble to exchange compliments with the barrel, and the tobacco, and each other, have felt invested with a new dignity and a sense of being citizens of no mean city.

And it was on ecclesiastical and parochial affairs that the talk at the bar turned one July evening, a few years ago. Mr.

Falconer, the vicar, had, it appeared, made up his mind that his burdens weighed too heavily on him, and that he must have a partner—not a wife, for Mr. Falconer had long been a husband—but a curate. So an advertisement appeared duly in the *Guardian*; and the Rev. Arthur Mason, fresh from Keble College, was engaged to come to Walton, where a little cottage beyond the Mill, at the bottom of the High Street, was destined as the place of his abode.

So much had been said when the rather limited and fragmentary conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a stranger. His face, frank and yet sensitive, was shaven; but, as if in recompense, his fair hair had been allowed to escape any recent rigorous cropping, and his long cloak, his wide-awake, and white tie, indicated his profession and explained his presence, even before he had asked to be directed to the vicarage. The sturdy labourers soon recovered enough self-possession to touch their caps, and then they deputed, with a variety of nods and nudges, one of their number to take him to his destination, which, indeed, was close at hand.

A walk up an avenue, and then a sudden turn, and the vicarage door was before them. Parting from his guide, the curate approached the porch, laden with woodbine. The hall-door was open; and while the stranger paused for a moment on the threshold, two figures emerged from an inner room.

"Above all, *he* must never know it," said the vicar.

"Never," said the other, easily distinguished as a pretty woman, and in widow's weeds.

And they shook hands with emphasis over the compact.

Arthur Mason was in perplexity. He was out in the moonlight, and they were in the hall and in lamplight. Had he seen the bell, he would have rung it, to announce his presence; but it was hidden in the shadow of the woodbine. His next impulse was to walk forward into the hall and introduce himself; but that would have been embarrassing. And, just as he

was meditating flight to a short distance, and then a noisy return to the porch, a woman's drapery swept softly past him, and the vicar, a little perturbed, was bidding him welcome to his first cure of souls.

II.

Long into the night the two parsons sat, the vicar recounting his raciest reminiscences of Oxford, as he knew it ; and the curate telling, not without enthusiasm, of the sayings and doings at Keble—sayings and doings which did not appear to impress the vicar quite so much as Arthur had hoped ; the truth being that Mr. Falconer knew more of horseflesh and the river than he did of theology, and was more at home in the affairs of the cellar than in those of the sacristy. Despite the difference in their tastes, however, the two men were pleased to be together, and each thought the other—what, indeed, each was, though in a different fashion—a capital fellow. In time, no doubt, too many reminiscences of turf and tide would have worried the curate, and too many vestments have wearied the hospitable patience of the vicar ; but, in a single evening, no two men of fair intelligence and of common ties have time to be bored with each other, given surroundings of at least normal ease. About the church, Arthur could not get much information from the parson who had been its keeper for nearly a score of years. Mr. Falconer did not know, and hardly seemed to care, whether there were said to be relics buried beneath the altar, or whether any piscina existed before the restoration was made. But about the country and the crops, and the squire and his table, and all the small chitchat of the neighbourhood, he was voluble enough. The salubrity of the situation, the healthiness of the soil, and the beauty of the woods, all were dwelt upon with feeling. And then, as if it were only fair that Arthur should know the worst as well as the best, the vicar, not without some little constraint of

manner, which sat singularly ill on him, cleared his voice and said—

“One thing is against us though. We have no society. The doctor is a good fellow, but a bachelor ; and the lawyer is a widower without children. So you see,” he added, looking at Arthur half inquiringly, “we have no girls—no female society at all. This is a unique parish—a parish without a peri.”

Peradventure the vicar thought he was giving Arthur a good opportunity for a little confession—for saying he didn’t care for girls, or that he had left a girl behind him who fulfilled his thoughts. But, instead of that, Arthur, watching the vanishing column of tobacco smoke he had just erected in air, said quietly—

“That lady I met at the door—she seemed charming. Is she not a parishioner?”

The vicar gained time—first by a long whiff, and then by a dilatory sip of the dregs in his tumbler.

“Oh, yes,” he said ; “certainly a parishioner. But——”

And again the vicar was overcome by thirst, and refreshed himself by a draught from the empty glass. That formality over, he looked vacantly into space, as though nothing were expected from him.

“But what?” asked Arthur, remindingly.

The vicar belched forth a large volume of smoke, as if to veil the issues between the questioner and the questioned. Then he said—

“Her late husband was an Oxford friend of mine. Old acquaintance’ sake, you know. But not, no, decidedly *not*, the sort of person whom I should recommend you to cultivate. If I may give you a little advice, I should say keep as clear of Rose Cottage as you can. Of course you must call ; and you will see Mrs. Marrable at church. But there are women with whom one’s relations should be friendly, others with whom

they should be formal—purely formal. She is one of the latter—and that is all.”

III.

The Rev. Arthur Mason had settled down in his cottage, had made the acquaintance of the parishioners, and had pondered well over the words of the vicar. One day, during his first week at Walton, and while he was still a guest at the vicarage, he was walking to church with his hostess, when they met Mrs. Marrable, to whom he was straightway introduced. After the talk of the first evening, he was rather surprised to be presented to Mrs. Marrable by the vicar’s wife; and the cordial words in which she expressed a hope that they would come to be great friends in a place where few friendships were possible, astonished him still further; but did not quite set him at his ease in talking to the woman with whom he had been warned that his relations should be formal—purely formal.

That was a difficult warning to take to heart, as warnings where women are concerned are apt to be. A widow who is young and pretty and *piquante* will always be an object of sentiment to a man susceptible of tenderness—and such a man Arthur Mason was. The love of all large-hearted men has in it an element of pity; pity, it may be, for the loved one individually; or pity for her sex and its sufferings; or pity for humanity, at large. But he who is insensible to the pathos of humanity, or of woman as woman, will find himself soften in the presence of widowhood—widowhood with its unwelcome self-dependence, its jarring necessities, its long regrets. If, all through that day’s service, Arthur had distractions, they did not arise merely from the memory of a pale face and a sympathetic voice, and an invitation to afternoon-tea at Rose Cottage, but were also interwoven with the recollection of that first meeting in the moonlight, even as the woodbine was interwoven with the lattice-work of the vicarage porch. And then, what the

vicar had said, and the way he said it, was all so odd. She was a person to be treated formally; but the squeeze of the hand Mr. Falconer himself had given her that same night was not so very formal after all; and the words he had said to her were such as would hardly be addressed to any but a trusted friend. Go to Rose Cottage he certainly would; and if the vicar made any remonstrance, he would make the vicar say what he really meant. He hated all mysteries, and this mystery in particular; and he would unravel it, if he could.

To Rose Cottage accordingly he went, and had tea upon the little lawn, and patted the little dog, and looked at two grey and serious eyes; and went again another day, by invitation; and then again without an invitation, merely because he was passing; until it happened that he was passing nearly every day.

The widow was an accomplished musician, and she had read "Tract XC." and she used the "Christian Year." It was easy for Arthur to persuade himself that these were the only links between her and him—the sufficient reason why he felt an afternoon hang heavily on his hands unless its programme included a visit to the cottage; being unconsciously impelled to find some such reason by the recollection of the vicar's monition. In no way could he learn from the widow anything which explained the vicar's advice; and when he mentioned the incident of the first meeting she grew reticent—archly reticent, he thought. Why should she make a mystery of it? His masculine vanity was piqued by a friendship which was not thorough, a confidence which was not complete; yet in other things she was confiding enough—a creature, as it seemed, without artifice.

One day, however, Mrs. Marrable showed unwonted willingness to talk about herself. She was troubled about the little house near Oxford where she had formerly lived. There was some difficulty about the lease, and these were things she did

not understand. Did he? Then she would be so very grateful if he would look through the papers, which were all in a bundle together. Arthur carried them off as triumphantly as another Arthur bore away the trophies of victory in war. He began to think himself a great general in love; for had he not, trusted as he now was, made some impression on a woman's heart?—a woman's heart, which is often more difficult to conquer than an army or a town.

IV.

The curate sat down to his search through Mrs. Marrable's documents in the late sunshine of the Midsummer evening. Something of the magic of the sunny Northern nights visits our temperate island in the depth of June. One of Nature's great moments passes over the forest and fields, and the birds are wakeful with a kind of consciousness. The last cuckoos call all night; there is no sleep. The heart of living things is beating; it is held close to the heart of Nature: something is going to be said. The young man was dressed in black cloth; his appearance was pastoral in only a strictly spiritual and metaphorical sense. But he was a creature of Nature—an honest man in love. And he opened his heart in the magical Midsummer, with prayers and thanksgivings on lips that had known neither lie nor lewdness, to receive the best gift of Heaven to man.

The first letter which he opened did *not* refer to the lease, though it did to the removal of Mrs. Marrable from her former home.

"Dear Mrs. Marrable," it ran, "I have no objection to urge against your coming to live at Walton so long as you observe secrecy as to the relations which have existed, and I hope may still exist, between us. As it is, I sometimes think my wife suspects.—Always yours, P. F."

Not until Arthur had read the note did he recognize the

writing as that of Mr. Falconer. Then he rose from his chair and paced his little room. For these few lines, while they added to the mystery about the vicar and Mrs. Marrable, made two other things quite plain to Arthur—that he had fallen in love, and that he was a miserable fool. What should he do with the letter—take it to the vicar, or, better still, to the vicar's wife? Or should he send it to the widow with a cold note, presenting his compliments to her, and regretting that he had found among the papers, and read, a letter evidently not intended for his eyes. But that would give her pain; and he would not do that. After all, she had not tried to make him love her; he had loved her of his own accord—wretched creature that he was.

He had thrown himself into his solitary armchair and buried his face in his hands, when the door opened, and in came the one contemporary male friend the village afforded him—the manager of the little local bank. To Gerald Knight, Arthur had often talked about the widow, and now he told him that he feared he was deeply hit, and that he must perforce tear himself away, for reasons he might not give in their entirety. Then he referred to that first night at the vicarage, repeating what was said by the vicar, “whom I know, I positively *know*, to be the greatest scoundrel on earth.”

Gerald was shocked; he thought better of the vicar, and he was anxious for the happiness of his friend.

“I trust her still,” said the curate, “I do, indeed, though I hardly dare to own it. The uncertainty is what is so miserable, so miserable that I think I shall go mad. If I knew that she was not what I believe her to be, I should be wretched, of course, and leave Walton; but I suppose I should recover; it is the doubt that will break my heart. Be my friend, and find out how things are, one way or the other.”

“It strikes me,” said Gerald, “that I might be able to do something. Mrs. Marrable is not a client of ours, but she

comes into the bank now and then to ask us to cash cheques for her, which, I suppose, we do, though against the rules, because she is so pretty. Some of her cheques are signed 'Frank Raines,' and drawn on our own bank at Farley. Now Farley is only thirty miles away, and the manager of the bank is a friend of mine, and can tell us, at any rate, about Frank Raines. I am going to see him to-morrow, and shall certainly refuse to leave you here alone with your melancholy. You must come."

"I think not," said Arthur. "It would hardly be a fair way of getting a clue."

"These things are fair in business," said Gerald, "why not in love—the greatest business of all? As a client of ours, you can write to us to ask us about the respectability of anybody in our neighbourhood from whom you are going to buy a horse. But you are going to do something more serious even than that; and if what we hear about Raines throws any light on the stock you want to invest in very heavily, why, all I can say or do is at your service."

So to Farley on the following day the friends went together; and, after lunch, one manager asked the other, with entire unconcern, who Frank Raines might be; and was informed that he was the rector, a bachelor, and an Oxford man. Arthur concluded instantly that he must have been a contemporary at Oxford of the vicar of Walton, and probably a friend. One had introduced the other to the pretty widow, whose husband, older than she, was also at Oxford, and no doubt their common friend.

"To-day," said the manager of the Farley bank, "we are having a local church festival after the hay harvest, and at the evening service, which you must certainly attend, Raines will preach. Of course you have heard of his preaching?"

No, they had not; but they would judge for themselves. So they went and heard a homily, containing passages of direct

and tender feeling, in which the several harvests of the year were touched upon with allusions to the ingatherings that take place in the course of human life. Much was said of Divine love, much of human affection. The preacher went so far as to compare the fears of rain and storm, remembered with delight when the barns are full, to those doubts and difficulties of lovers, talked over in the after-peace of happy marriage. Mr. Raines' style was distinctly human ; he made a level appeal to his hearers' hearts ; and to Arthur's simple but troubled soul his words spoke an irrefutable peace.

V.

After the service Mr. Raines caught the bank manager and his two friends, and compelled them to come in to supper. Any inclination on the part of Arthur to regard his host as a villain was quickly dispelled by the manner of one of the frankest and least affected of men.

"Talking of sermons," said Arthur.

"Who was talking of them?" said the host a little impatiently, passing round the wine.

"Well," said Arthur, filling his glass, "I know we weren't talking of them, but I want to introduce the subject, and for a very particular reason. That sermon of yours to-night——"

"Spare me," said Mr. Raines, "you know my little secret, I see. Falconer has confessed, and has implicated me. But what *is* a man to do, when he cannot compose his own? Besides, we both wanted to help the little widow of our friend, who was left by no means too well off. So you see we killed two birds with one stone."

"Falconer has told me nothing," said Arthur. "But I know he preached last week at our own hay-harvest festival the very sermon we have just heard."

"Ah, that is the awkward part of it," said Mr. Raines. "Farley and Walton are only thirty miles apart, and Fal-

coner's reputation and mine have each extended for about fifteen miles round, thanks to your clever Mrs. Marrable, you know."

That night, in his own armchair, Arthur again called himself a fool. But the same word has many meanings ; and, said with a laugh, has quite another significance than when uttered with a groan.

It was now Mr. Falconer's turn to groan, which he did with emphasis ; but Arthur was not hard upon him, feeling that he himself required forgiveness for much ill that he had half thought about the vicar, but never, never once, he kept assuring himself, about the widow.

"My dear fellow," said Mr. Falconer, "I can bear anything but this—that my wife should know I did not write those sermons. They were the last thing left to me which she much admired ; I really think they were. I will do penance in the future, but at least leave me in possession of the past."

Whereat Arthur solemnly pledged himself to secrecy. And when the doctor, after hearing the vicar deliver crude compositions of his own, asked Arthur if he had noticed any sign of failing health about Mr. Falconer, and especially any symptoms which seemed to point at softening of the brain, Arthur only smiled, and said that he never knew Mr. Falconer to be better in his life.

And Arthur was right ; for the vicar's penance, though it was a domestic trial certainly, did not prey upon his mind. Nay, indeed, there was moved from him the dread of an exposure, which had haunted him for years. And if most of the people at the Royal Oak rather took the doctor's view of the case, there were one or two who swore he preached better than ever—one of these being Deaf Tom, whom the vicar, in completion of his penance, had just made his pensioner to the amount by which he had formerly added to the widow's funds. But whatever else was controverted at the Royal Oak, all agreed that there was nothing like matrimony for "bettering curates in the manner of their speech."

A Ropemakers' Saturday Night.

SOME years ago it was my lot to reside in an eastern suburb of the great northern city of Liverpool. Long ago—how long I dare not say—the place, though it could never have been picturesque, must have had a charm of its own, for even at the time when I knew it there were pleasant bits of field where buttercups and daisies still welcomed the spring, and there were left a few coigns of vantage whence, looking across the hidden valley of the great river, you could see the broad slopes of the cairn-topped Moel Famma sleeping in the afternoon sunlight. It is pleasant to have these two or three things to place in the foreground of one's mental picture, for there is nothing else to dwell upon with complacency, much less with delight. The wide main street of what was called in subtle satire "the village," with its barn-like or prison-like roperies, odorous of tar and oil, and surmounted by stumpy chimneys always smoking their worst, its frowsy-looking shops all smelling of soap, its crowds of children who plainly showed that the saponaceous supply overran the demand; and the narrower by-streets, with their rows of cottages, which might, with few exceptions, be bracketed in any competition for the achievement of dirty dismalness, were alike repulsive and noisome, equally repellent to the senses and saddening to the spirit. True, the colour and gilding of numerous ginshops introduced an element of oddly discordant sumptuousness; but unfortunately the doors were always open, and the guests sadly discredited the splendours of their banqueting-house. I must admit that, in spite of the buttercups and Moel Famma, it was a depressing neighbourhood.

At the date when I made its acquaintance, the dinner-hour

was the publican's harvest-time. Many of the "hands" employed in the various roperies lived too far away from their work to allow of their dining at home ; and as the foot-walk of a street is hardly the most comfortable place for the enjoyment of a meal, especially in wet or windy weather, it was, perhaps, hardly surprising that between twelve and one o'clock the various bars should be full, not only of men and boys but of women and girls, all busily engaged in emptying their own pockets and filling the landlords' tills.

By far the greatest proportion of the noontide *habitués* of the ginshops naturally came from the sheds of the most important ropery in the neighbourhood—an immense establishment belonging to Messrs. Garnock and Bibby, who were then, and I believe are still, the largest producers of rope in Europe, probably in the world. In an auspicious hour for the workers in this little metropolis of hemp, the heads of this firm being, like Carlyle, disbelievers in the doctrine of *laissez faire*, came to the conclusion that something must be done, and that they were the people who were called upon to do it. The instinct was doubtless one of helpful philanthropy, but it clearly admitted of justification on the most strictly economical principles ; for it was plain enough that the midday revelling might be a bad thing, not only for the revellers themselves but also for their employers—that the quantity or quality of work done during the afternoon might naturally be expected to suffer from the results of the bacchanalian dinner-hour. The first outcome of Messrs. Garnock and Bibby's happy thought was the erection of a large hall, fitted with benches, on which the diners might sit ; a large stove, upon which the frugal meals might be warmed ; and a few long tables, upon which the viands might be spread. The new dining-room quickly became popular ; it was weather-tight, warm, and really comfortable ; a place "too bright and good" to be allowed to stand for twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four altogether un-

utilized. Happy thought number one was followed by happy thought number two—the organization of a night-school for the ropery lads and lasses, and for such of the men and women as might not disdain to associate with their juniors in the study of the three R's. A body of teachers was soon organized, and though probably the majority of them found the task harder than they had anticipated, still they had their successes, and, on the whole, were not discouraged. From Monday night to Friday night the work went on, and on Saturday evening only was the room left to solitude and to the moonlight which flowed in through the large skylights. This, however, was not to be for long. One Saturday night, about seven o'clock, I was walking through the village, when at the door of the school, as the room had come to be called, I encountered Walters the foreman, who had been an enthusiastic supporter of the educational scheme, and Pugh, one of the better workmen, whose arithmetic class had been one of its prominent successes. We stood chatting for a few minutes, and then, knowing that their homes were in the same direction as mine, I asked if either or both were walking my way. "No," said Walters, "we're just going into the school. A few of us have taken to turning in on Saturday nights, and we have a game of draughts, and a smoke and chat, and maybe a bit of a debate; Pugh here is a terrible fellow for arguing." Pugh laughed. "I'd have to be a good deal cleverer than I am to argue by myself," said he. "Some of them would talk my head off, and I don't care to tackle them; but it's Mr. Walters as sets me on. When Quayle has done one of his yarns full of all the long words in the dictionary, and nothing but regular bosh, Mr. Walters says, 'Well, Jim, what do you think o' that?' and I'm bound to say something, whether I will or not; and there's plenty are ready to talk when once they get started." I smiled, for I knew Quayle rather too well for my peace, and was not without painful experiences of his lengthy discourses. I had visited him once

when he was suffering from the results of a slight accident, and he had shown his gratitude ever since by button-holing me whenever I was in any special hurry, and refusing to let me escape until his last word—the last of many—had been said. He had enjoyed a better education than most of his fellow-workmen, and in his early days had been a schoolmaster and a local preacher among the Methodists ; but he had been rather too fond of refreshing himself after the labours of the desk and pulpit with the cup which inebriates as well as cheers ; and after various vicissitudes—including a brief residence in a workhouse—he had turned ropemaker, and as a ropemaker it seemed likely that he would end his days. Pugh had not half Quayle's educational advantages, but he had a quick, shrewd mind, plenty of Celtic vivacity—his name seemed to indicate a Welsh descent—and a considerable fund of satirical humour, which he did not at all object to draw upon when there seemed to be an opening for it.

"Can you spare half an hour to come in with us?" said Walters ; "they'll be very glad to see you if you have the time." "I have nothing to do," I said, "and I will come in gladly enough if there is any chance of a debate." "There's certain to be one if Quayle's there," replied the foreman ; "Jim and he are like a couple of game-cocks ; they can't help flying at each other." This promise of a conversational cock-fight was too tempting, so I followed Walters and Pugh into the well-lighted room, which in spite of its bareness was not altogether unattractive. About half a dozen men, three of whom I knew, were present, but the redoubtable Quayle had evidently not arrived. Two of the men were seated at a table, busily engaged in a game of draughts, from which they looked up for a moment to wish us good evening, and then resumed their play ; the rest were seated on chairs around the stove. One of the two draught-players was a young Irishman named Sullivan, who had won much *kudos* by elocutionary renderings of Lover and Carleton at some local penny readings, and with

whom I had had one or two talks on Irish affairs, he being, like one or two more distinguished bearers of his name, an uncompromising advocate of Home Rule. In the larger group I at once recognized two more acquaintances—Wells, a young and somewhat delicate-looking man, who was a shining light in a little local Baptist congregation; and next to him the most noteworthy figure of the group, a workman named Carver, with gentle dreamy eyes, a large head, specially well developed in the region where phrenologists place the imaginative organs, and a voice with a peculiar refinement of tone which arrested a hearer at once. Room was made for us round the stove, pipes were lighted, and the conversation was for a time trivial and desultory; but gradually we drifted into talk of a co-operative store, which had been established in the village, and from which some of the talkers expected great things. Carver was one of the enthusiasts. He had when a boy been a pupil at the little school kept by Thomas Cooper, afterwards celebrated as a Chartist leader; had imbibed from his early master a certain imaginative radicalism; and looked upon the co-operative movement as a stepping-stone to a regenerated society. He had been talking for some time with a quiet eloquence about what the world might be if men would only work with instead of against each other, when all at once Pugh broke in. "It won't do, Carver; it won't do. I'm not going to say a word against co-operation; I believe in co-operation as much as anybody; co-operation in production most of all, for if you stop when you've started an all-sorts shop, you might as well not begin; but you'll never do any good with work, even if you're working together, unless you know how to work, or unless you'll be taught by them as does know, and that's just where the master system 'll al'ays have the pull over co-operation. Just now it seems to me as co-operation means that everybody's master, and I'm as good as you, or you're as great a fool as me, for it comes pretty much to the same thing; and, if you add a

hundred fools together, you don't get one wise man as the total."

It so happened that Mr. Ruskin's "Time and Tide by Weare and Tyne" had just been published; and I, having come fresh from its perusal, could not but be struck by the curious way in which Pugh had hit upon some of Mr. Ruskin's conclusions. It seemed that Pugh had not seen the book, or even heard of it, and that even the great Art-critic's name was unfamiliar to him, as indeed it was to all present with the solitary exception of Carver, who said he had read an article in a magazine about a gentleman of that name who had written upon painting, and he had always wished he could get hold of his book. I said that this same Mr. Ruskin was the writer of the book to which I referred; and then I told them something of the writer's career, and explained how in thinking about art as a product of man's labour and a means to man's delight, he had been led to certain views concerning the right state of society and the true conditions of human life, going on to give them as adequate a summary as I could of the letters in "Time and Tide" which bore specially upon the subject of which we had been talking; promising finally to bring the little volume with me on the following Saturday evening, and read for them some of the great writer's own words.

Carver and Pugh were evidently intensely interested, and to a greater or less extent their interest seemed to be shared by all the others, one or two of whom were clearly surprised that any book by a great writer should have any bearing upon a subject of such near and practical interest as the new "store." For, I need hardly say, neither of the two men named is to be accepted as a typical ropemaker. Ropemakers as a rule must, I fear, be described as not merely uneducated but degraded; and the natural mental vigour of a workman like Pugh, or the acquired culture of such a man as Carver, are rare in any class of handicraftsmen, with the exception of the workers in one or two great manufacturing centres, where they are more common

than might be supposed by people who judge of "the British workman" from hearsay rather than from personal knowledge. Still, even the average maker of rope, dull as he often is, ignorant as he almost always is, does not strike one who really knows him as in any respect hopeless. He is simply neglected: he has never been made to feel that the petty and narrow interests of his own little life are bound up with the greater and wider interests of the life of the world; and the look which came into some of my hearers' faces as I tried to tell them how Mr. Ruskin had worked his way to these thoughts of his about real masterhood and true service, was in itself evidence enough that the dullest and most ignorant of them had at any rate a potential capability for that apprehension of ample horizons, which is the beginning and the middle and the end of what we call culture.

Of course, I have not pretended to give a report or even a summary of our evening's talk, but only a hint or two concerning its scope and drift. My promise of some readings on co-operation and kindred matters from the new book seemed to bring it to a natural close, and as the clock hanging on the wall had struck ten, which seemed to be the usual hour of breaking up, we all rose, and after a parting chat upon the foot-walk of the now crowded village street, went our several ways homeward, I having for companions Walters and Pugh, the latter full of enthusiasm at what he evidently regarded as a new departure. I had been asked to come early to the next Saturday gathering, and when I got to "the school" at seven o'clock I found about a dozen men listening to a sesquipedalian monologue from the eloquent Quayle. He was rather uncere- moniously brought to a pause by Pugh, and I was speedily called upon to fill the post of vicarious lecturer. I read the preface and the first three letters in "Time and Tide," and though the letters are short the reading was long; for I had solicited rather than deprecated interruption, and I had to come to a standstill at the close of almost every paragraph. Somebody

has said that one of the best ways to gauge a man's intelligence is to take note of the questions he asks; and as most of the interjected remarks assumed an interrogative form, I had ample opportunities of testing the intellectual specific gravity of my listeners, and it was impossible not to be impressed by the aptness and shrewdness both of the questions and of the modestly tentative, but by no means timid, criticisms. What struck me chiefly was the singular ease with which several of the men from whom I had expected little or nothing—men who were apparently on a much lower intellectual grade than Pugh or Carver—not only seized the special points but grasped the general method of the writer, breathing in as it were the very atmosphere of his thought. Indeed, of all who took part in this interjectional questioning and commentary, Quayle was the only one to whom this remark would not apply, and I accounted for the difference between him and his comrades by a theory which still seems to me sound. He, as already hinted, was not a thoroughbred working man. He had been born and brought up among the lower middle-class, the class which beyond all others is steeped in what we of late years have come to call Philistinism; that is, the devotion to certain traditions of thinking—or non-thinking, which is perhaps the better way of putting it—the inability to shift from an inherited intellectual standing ground, the incapacity for seeing anything save in the direction in which the eye has been trained to look, and in which, as a matter of fact, it always does look. Now, the one thing about these friends of mine, and about the majority of their fellow-workmen in other trades, which constitutes their principal intellectual attraction in the present, and which, in spite of all their follies, inspires one with a confident hope for their future, is simply this—that, whatever they may be, they are not Philistines. Aristocratic or middle-class lookers-on, seeing that the working man cares nothing for the things which interest them, probably say that his mind is vacant. The observer who knows better can well afford to

admit the charge provisionally and for the moment, if only for the purpose of urging the obvious proposition that vacancy has the advantage of being incompatible with undesirable pre-occupation. A garden where nothing grows is in many ways preferable to a garden overrun with weeds ; and whether the vacancy theory be or be not correct, the fact remains—that the typical working man is eminently distinguished for intellectual flexibility, for detachment of mind, for genial hospitality, not only to new thoughts but to new modes and forms of thought. Fourteen years ago, in the pages of the *Cornhill Magazine*, Mr. Matthew Arnold smiled politely at Mr. Frederic Harrison because he had attributed to the working classes “the brightest powers of sympathy and the readiest powers of action.” Seeing the various sorts and conditions of men comprised in our little assembly of listening and talking ropemakers, it is surely not unwarrantable to take them as fairly representative ; and the brightness of their sympathy, the readiness of their welcome to alien ideas, was just what impressed me first, and longest, and always most vividly. I took no notes of this or of any of our many Saturday nights, and cannot after the time that has passed—for I am speaking of ten years ago—recall the details of our talks, though now and then a shrewd sentence or a happy phrase revisits my memory ; but nothing could well be clearer and sharper than the total impression that they have left behind.

At one of the earliest of our evenings—I think it must have been the very evening of which I have been speaking—Pugh uttered a sentence which, had Mr. Arnold heard it, would surely have made him a convert to the view of Mr. Harrison, for it was the enunciation of one of his own pet doctrines by a man who had never read a line of his books, never heard of the glory of sweetness and light. One of the talkers had remarked of some idea of Mr. Ruskin’s that it was very good, but the difficult thing was to get it put into practice. “No, it isn’t,” said Pugh ; “that’s just where you’re wrong : that’s where a lot o’ folks is

wrong. It's easy enough to get a good idea put into practice ; the thing that isn't easy is to get a good idea understood, and the fun of it is that some o' the people who are shoutin' the loudest over it, and saying what a tremendously good idea it is, are just the people who know nothing about it. Doing's easy ; I sometimes think we'd be better off if it weren't as easy as it is ; it's the understanding that's the tough job." Readers who will turn to those fascinating but occasionally irritating chapters on "Culture and Anarchy," will find that Pugh at any rate showed his "ready powers of sympathy" by a very obvious agreement with the great preacher of sweet reasonableness. Indeed, whatever this Ropemakers' Saturday Night was, one thing it certainly was not—it was not a little parliament of the representatives of Gath and Askalon.

While I assisted at the little gatherings we had many a long talk about such diverse books as J. S. Mill's "Liberty," and Carlyle's "Past and Present," and even Cardinal Newman's "Grammar of Assent," which is hardly the sort of reading supposed to appeal to ropemakers, but which they enjoyed immensely, relishing particularly nice distinctions, such as that between certitude and certainty, and behaving generally in a way that would be incredible to superfine critics. I am not, however, anxious to maintain that this sketch is credible : I can only declare that it is true. For two years or more I and my friends worked and talked and wrangled together, and then I was called to live a score of miles away, and had to leave them to work and talk and wrangle by themselves, which things I believe they did with undiminished activity. Most of my ropemaking friends have passed from my sight, some of them have passed away from earth ; but every now and then I have a visit from Pugh, and whenever we meet we always travel back to the old Saturday night.

The moral of this record is—but there are too many morals, and I must leave them to point themselves.

JAMES ASHCROFT NOBLE.

The Law of the Mother and the Child.

COMPLEX as is English law and difficult of mastery, there is one branch of it which may lay claim to a savage simplicity. The law relating to the care and custody of children has come down to us almost untouched from the good old days, when a wife was thought of as a personal chattel, to be corrected at discretion ; and accordingly, as far as she is concerned, the father's right to have the control of the children is absolute. A mother, as against a father, has no voice whatever in the bringing up of her children, nor will any Court interfere to help her, except in the interests of the children themselves. So absolute and inherent is this power of the father that he cannot even deprive himself of it—nothing he can do or promise, nor any tenderness of years on the part of the child, or of affection on the part of the mother, can serve to oust his right. But it is not only in life that the father's right is supreme, for his power is untouched by death. It is always open to him to appoint guardians, who will be able after his death to control the education and custody of the children quite independently or in spite of the mother. In the case of *Talbot v. Shrewsbury* (4 M. & C., 688) the law on this point was laid down with a convenient clearness. "When," said Lord Cottenham, "this case was before me in the autumn I had considerable reason to believe that there was much misapprehension in the mind of the mother, and I thought it necessary to explain that, in point of law, she had no right to control the power of the testamentary guardian. It is proper that mothers of children thus circumstanced should know they have no right, as such, to interfere with testamentary guardians." These words, meant mercifully, and only spoken

to free women's minds from illusions, give some idea of the rights conferred upon testamentary guardians when appointed by the father ; but it must not be supposed that any corresponding power is given to the mother : on the contrary, any appointment she may make is *ipso facto* void. In the event, however, of there being no testamentary guardian appointed by the father, the mother's natural claim is recognized, and she is entitled to the care and custody of her children. The right of the father, though thus unimpeachable by the mother, was always liable to be controlled in the interest of the children ; and in cases of gross immorality or profligacy, or apprehended cruelty, the Court of Chancery has always had power to intervene.

A wider discretion is now enjoyed, first conferred by Sergeant Talfourd's Act (1840), and confirmed and extended by the Infants Custody Act (1873). Under the operation of these statutes, wherever there has been gross misbehaviour on the part of the father, the Court has power to make such regulations as to the custody of, or access to, the children as under the circumstances may seem desirable. Still some wrong-doing is necessary as a condition precedent to the Court's power to interfere. "The Act," says Sir J. Turner, "assumes and proceeds upon the existence of the paternal right ; it will, however, connect the paternal right with the marital duty, and imposes the marital duty as a condition of recognizing the paternal right." These safeguards, such as they are, however, are confined to the classes that can afford the luxury of Chancery proceedings ; and it is much to be desired that the seventeenth section of the Married Women's Property Act (1882), providing for the summary settlement in the County Court of differences between husband and wife should be extended to cover disputes about the education and custody of children. We have seen not only that the father is supreme in the family, but that his authority outlasts his life ; and that, by means of testamentary guardians, his dead hand is still able to

keep the living mother from her child. But, not content with placing the guardian before the mother, the law will insist that a child shall be brought up in the religion of its dead father, although he leave no express directions, and though the task be heart-breaking to the mother. And here we may well ask upon what rational principle this law, the sad survival of a time when women were not recognized as having rights at all, is based, or can be defended. It may be safely said that there are only two considerations which ought to be looked to by the State,—the saving of pain and the well-being of the child. When the father is dead, it is a little idle to talk about the paramount nature of his claim, seeing that the danger of a divided household, the only rationalistic basis for the preference given to him, is effectively obviated by death. It cannot be said that there is a probability of his faith being the true one, for the excellent reason that the State has no notion which the true one is. In the eye of the State all forms of Christianity are equally good, and even if this fine neutrality were departed from, matters would not be mended, as the odds would still be even that while the husband had embraced some form of more or less damnable error, the wife would be professing the choicest Erastianism. We are therefore in the presence of a twofold uncertainty—first, from the point of view of the State, there is no sort of probability of one form of faith being more correct than another; and, secondly, if there were, there would be no probability that the husband would hold it rather than the wife. While both parents are alive it may well be that the father should control the education and religious teaching of his children, but on his death that right ought, subject to agreement between the parties, to survive to the mother. Such a change in the law might, perhaps, add a new terror to death, but it is a choice of suffering. On the one side we have the last hours of the dying man embittered by the thought that his children will be brought up in an alien faith; and on the other, we

have the spoiling of the life of the woman. As the law now stands, many a mother has to choose between herself teaching her child to lisp the creed she believes to be false, and seeing him cared for by others, growing up a stranger to her love. It is difficult to imagine a more painful position than that of a mother who, let us say, is a zealous Catholic, clinging passionately to her faith, and yet called upon to teach her children doctrines in which she has no belief, and forbidden to let them join with her in prayers that have been the stay and the support of her life. After all, religion is the thing that lends the colouring to the lives of most of us, and a difference upon that point must be fatal to the closest of human fellowships, and must make impossible that community of feeling and identity of hopes and fears which ought to be between the mother and the child. The mother who sees her children growing old in what she deems error must also feel that the years mean distance, and that in the most sacred moments of their lives her children will come to look upon her "with alien eyes." When the days run smoothly the difference may not be felt, but there will still be the shadow of the impassable barrier which makes it for ever impossible that in the hour of their common need they should kneel at the same shrine, their hearts pulsing to a common hope and their lips moving to a common prayer. Under the existing law, although the father's views about religion may have been comparatively colourless, the mother must still stifle her own strong convictions, and spend her days in trying to obey the law, by teaching those who are dearest to her to be, at any rate, excellent heretics. If the law were otherwise, and the rights of the living mother were not sacrificed to the claims of the dead, no such violence need be done. For if depth of religious conviction were on the side of the father, it would always be open to the mother to give peace to his last hours by yielding him the promise that her children should be brought up as he wished; and a promise so consecrated by the presence of death

would be likely to be fulfilled. But if there be really any doubt as to which system would most save suffering, the question at issue may be laid at rest by dwelling upon the other consideration—the interest of the child. From the point of view of the State, it is matter of supreme indifference to which of the churches the child shall belong, and even if it were otherwise there can be no antecedent probability in favour of the mother's being a Protestant or a Catholic ; so that all we have to ask ourselves is whether it is the interest of the child to be brought up not in this faith or that, but in the religion of its surviving parent—a question which, we take it, admits of but one answer. In the judgment of Vice-Chancellor Wickens, in *Hawksworth v. Hawksworth* (L. R., 6 Ch. p. 540), after directions that the child should be brought up in the religion of its dead father, we find these words : “ The result will be to create a barrier between a widowed mother and her only child, to annul the mother's influence over her daughter on the most important of all subjects, with the almost inevitable effect of weakening it in all others, to introduce a disturbing element into a union that ought to be as close, as warm, and as absolute as any known to man ; and, lastly, to inflict severe pain on both mother and child.” Apart, however, from the temporal happiness of the child, which can hardly be much promoted by separating it from its mother by the deepest and most penetrating of all differences, we must consider the probable effect upon its spiritual welfare. As we are necessarily dealing not with concrete instances but with cases in the abstract, it is clearly impossible to say whether the religion, *qua* religion, of the father or the mother is the best—which inability, as far as the State is concerned, would continue, even if the facts of a given instance were supplied—and it is clearly not possible to say *à priori* that the father would be more likely to be religious than the mother. But men of all creeds would agree in saying that, whatever the child's faith, his belief in it ought to be

thorough and sincere. It may be safely left, then, to the common sense of mankind to say whether a child's faith is likely to be robust when he has been brought up in an atmosphere of sectarian incredulity, and when, from his earliest years, he has known that those who are nearest and closest to him believe that his religious teachers are most damnably wrong. The single question we have to face is whether a boy is more likely to grow up an earnest and religious man when his earliest religious impressions have been in harmony with the surroundings of the home life, or when from the first he has been made to feel that there is a jarring difference between the words of his religious instructor and the beliefs of his mother. Arguing, then, from the broad facts of human nature, we may confidently say that not only the happiness of the mother but the best interests of the child require that it should be brought up in the religion of the surviving parent. In coming to this conclusion we have taken no heed of pecuniary advantages which might accrue to a child from the profession of one creed or another. The Courts have shown a laudable reluctance to interfere on any such ground, and, as one of the old judges observed, there might be some difficulty in fixing the precise sum for which a child's faith should be bartered, and the price of apostasy would have to vary in different conditions of life. Indeed, if such a principle were to be accepted by the Courts in its nakedness, no child, in the absence of special circumstances, ought to be educated in any creed except that of the Establishment. In cases, however, where the negligence of the father has given rise to a question whether or not his right to interfere ought to be recognized, the Court has taken into consideration the comparative temporal advantages offered by the different religions. The increased power proposed to be conferred upon mothers would, however, have little result in this respect, as though, in certain instances, paternal relatives—whose piety was of the venomous type—might be tempted to alter their wills, there is no ante-

cedent reason for supposing that the balance of money and vindictiveness might not be on the side of the friends of the mother. In short, then, to the sort of blind fetish worship with which men bred in the traditions of English law regard the paternal authority, we would oppose these three considerations: the proposed change would in no way diminish that authority while the father is able to use it; when he is dead, the mother ought to be relieved from the necessity of choosing between losing the love of her child and teaching it what she believes to be wrong; and the welfare of the child requires that every influence ought to be removed which could by possibility breed estrangement or separateness between it and its mother. On the other hand, there is one objection which has weighed much with us, and which we now proceed to deal with. We may be met with the argument that to make a child's faith dependent upon the life of its father—to leave it in the power of the widow violently to change its religion—is to trifle with young conviction, and in the end to endanger belief altogether.

This reasoning is not new, and in the converse case has received careful attention at the hands of the English judges. We have seen that, as against the father, a woman has no rights whatever, and if the Courts have interfered to restrain a father, or testamentary guardian, in the matter of the religious bringing up or education of a child, it has been only in that child's own behalf. Between the husband and wife there can be no conflict, and the only dispute that can arise is between the father and the child, or, rather, between the father and the law that protects the child. If a father, through indifference, or weakness, or affection, allows his child to be indoctrinated with the tenets of another creed—lets, for instance, the mother bring it up in a faith different from his—it is within the discretion of the Court, after viewing all the circumstances of the case, to say whether the father ought to be prevented from suddenly turning round and ordering that the child's religion shall be changed—pre-

vented, that is, from abusing his own power. All the cases, however, go to show that the only thing the Court has ever considered has been, not the feelings of the mother, but the interest of the infant. Thus, when from the age of the child, or its intelligence, or from the nature of the influences to which it has been subjected, the Court has been of opinion that its religious opinions have been so far formed as to make it dangerous to try and upset them, the father has been prevented from attempting any interference—the welfare of his child requiring that the exercise of his authority should be restrained. And the better to form an independent opinion, the judges have in several cases privately examined the child to see whether the distinctive tenets of the Church in which it has been brought up have taken such deep hold that an attempt to blot them out would be to endanger the child's peace, or, perhaps, to unsettle its mind as to religious impressions altogether. Thus in the well-known case of *Stourton v. Stourton* (8 D.M. and G. 760), a boy of nine years and a half was examined by the Lord Justices, and in consequence ordered to be educated in the religion of his mother, who was a Protestant, his dead father being a Catholic. In his judgment Lord Justice Knight Bruce said:—

“The boy spoke in a manner convincing me that the Protestant seed sown in his mind had taken such hold, that if we are to suppose it to contain tares, they cannot be gathered up without great danger of rooting up the wheat with them. Upon much consideration I am of opinion that the child's tranquillity and health, his temporal happiness, and, if that can exist apart from spiritual welfare, his spiritual welfare also, are too likely now to suffer importantly from an endeavour at effacing his Protestant impressions not to render any such attempt unsafe and improper.”

But the tendency in later years has been very much to qualify this doctrine, until, in the *Agar-Ellis* case, it may be said to have been almost disposed of. Not only has it been a direct incentive to a widowed mother to forget her duty, which, as the law explains it, is to bring up her children in the faith their

father professed, even though she utterly disapprove it, but it has resulted in real evil, by causing children to be introduced unnaturally and prematurely into the atmosphere of theological controversy. Proselytizing busybodies, too, have been encouraged to get hold of children of tender years, in the hope that, if they can bring them up for a longer or shorter period in their own particular form of belief, they will be able to set the parental authority at defiance. And it is abundantly clear, that even if a child was kidnapped for the purpose of proselytism, the Court, after a time, upon the same principles, would have to prevent a father from trying to undo the work that had been done. In *Hawksworth v. Hawksworth*, Vice-Chancellor Wickens examined the child, feeling himself bound by the authority of *Stourton v. Stourton*, but added that he only did so as a matter of form, not believing that an interview of a stranger with a child of eight years and a half could help to any right conclusion. In the Court above, while confirming the order of the Vice-Chancellor, the judges refused to examine the child, sheltering themselves, however, beneath the observation that in *Stourton v. Stourton* the boy was some months older. In *Agar-Ellis v. Lascelles* (10 Ch. D. 49), however, one at least of the children was considerably older, but both the Divisional Court and the Court of Appeal refused to examine them.

“In our opinion,” said Lord Justice James, “it is not necessary to examine further the considerations expressed in *Stourton v. Stourton* and the other cases, because, however weighty, they are considerations for the father to deal with, without being subject to appeal or revision by this Court. If a good and honest parent, taking into consideration the past teaching to which his children have in fact been subject, and the effect of that teaching on their minds, and the risk of unsettling their convictions, comes to the conclusion that it is right, and for their welfare, temporal and spiritual, that he should take means to counteract that teaching and undo its effect, he is by law the proper and sole judge of that, and we, as the judges of the Court, have no more right to sit in appeal from the conclusion which he has conscientiously and honestly arrived at than we should have to sit in appeal from his conclusion as to the particular church his children should attend, the particular

sermons they should hear, the particular books that should be placed in their hands. He is quite as likely to judge rightly as we are to judge for him. At all events the law has made him, and not us, the judge, and we cannot interfere with him in his honest exercise of the jurisdiction which the law has confided to him."

It may be observed that in this case the Court was acting upon the assumption that the father had done nothing which could be construed as an abdication of his rights, and that the children had been educated as Catholics without his authority and against his wishes. Had there been any lapse of duty on his part, or anything like connivance at what was going on, the Court would perhaps have been more inclined to interfere. The same remark holds good in cases where testamentary guardians are concerned, as their office being one of pure trust is peculiarly within the cognizance of the Court. What stands out clearly, however, is, that where there has been no fault or misconduct such as would disentitle a father to be considered as a fit and proper judge of what is best for his children, the Court will not interfere with his absolute discretion. If, for instance, a Protestant father finds that his wife has used her opportunities as a mother secretly to bring up the children as Catholics, the Court of Chancery, while fully recognizing the peril there would be in any attempt to make them unlearn what they have been taught, and violently to make them members of the Church of England, will still be content to think that all that will be thought of by the father, and if, in spite of it all, he still think it best for the children to try to make them change their faith, the Court will not interfere. If, then, after a full experience, the Court of Chancery has come to this conclusion, why should not the same trust be placed in the discretion of the mother when the death of the father leaves the children upon her hands? We have seen that it would generally be for the interest of the children to be brought up in the religion of their surviving parent, and where they were still young at the father's death no difficulty could arise. When,

on the other hand, they had reached years of discretion, there would be the same question as to the peril of trying to change their faith as was discussed in the Agar-Ellis case, and it might safely be decided upon the same principles. A mother would be at least as likely as the father to be guided only by what she felt was the best for her child, while to her judgment she would bring a fuller and closer knowledge of her child's natural temperament and disposition. But, however hardly and sadly the law may work when a widowed mother is forced to bring up a young family in a faith that is not her own—and it seems such a needless adding to human misery to oblige a Protestant to instruct her little ones in the advantages of the confessional, or a Catholic mother to shape her children's lips to Protestant prayers!—it may be said that, after all, the woman got what she bargained for; she knew when she married that in life and in death her husband would be master of the consciences of her children. Admitting with an entire frankness that this is true, the question that waits answer is, whether it is right or useful that the law should stand as it does, and whether it would not rather be desirable on grounds of public policy, and because it would save suffering, and be best for the child, that the paramount rights of the father should end with the grave.

Now, however, we proceed to deal with the cases where a woman does not get what she bargained for. Nothing is better settled than that no promise, however solemn, can help to bind a man to bring up his children in the faith of their mother, and to this rule there is no exception known to the law; so that it makes no matter whether the promise be before marriage or after, by word or under seal; in no way can the father divest himself of his absolute authority over his children. What has too often been the result of this ruling is probably painfully familiar to most of our readers. A woman, let us say, prizes her faith as she prizes nothing else in the

world, and rather than see children of hers brought up strangers to it she is ready to accept loneliness, and to remain single all her days. She is courted, perhaps, by one who is outside her Church, and to win her consent he promises that she shall have the care of the religious training of any children of the marriage, and she consents. The woman then builds her trust upon that word—upon the faith of it she gives herself up to the man ; it is the first condition of her marriage, the *sine quâ non*, the one thing without which it would never have been ; and yet, if the husband choose to forget his promise, and to break his word, or to laugh it aside as one of the sweet insincerities of courtship, there is no help for the woman. She may have staked her whole life's happiness upon the faith of that single promise, but the law of England will not the less allow the husband to disregard it, and even assist him in justifying what seems his dastardly unfaithfulness. We say, seems his dastardly unfaithfulness, because the worst of it is, that it is precisely the best men—the men most under the influences of religion—who are most likely to feel that it is their bounden duty to betray their trust. Nor, happily, need there be anything like harsh judgment or blame ; rather, on the contrary, that wilful disappointment of another's love and trust may ring of the truest heroism, and be only the painfulest duty accepted bravely. We take it that in such a case it would be a man's hard but still imperative duty, to let the girl who had believed in him feel that he had failed her, and to withdraw his word, and to bring up his children in his own faith. But it is one thing to point out what would be a father's duty if he were free, and quite another thing to say that he ought to be free. We have said that the State can have no interest in seeing that children are brought up in one form of Christianity rather than another, and in any case there could be no *à priori* probability that that form would be the father's rather than the mother's ; and by direct conse-

quence it follows that the State ought to give validity to such a promise as we have been considering. In all the ordinary contracts of life marriage is treated as a good consideration, making a contract binding. Thus, if an uncle promise his nephew £500 per annum in the event of his marrying a particular girl, and the youth do marry her, no amount of shuffling will help the uncle to back out of his promise. In the same way, whenever a promise respecting the religion of children can be shown to have been a condition precedent to the marriage, it ought to be a covenant as sacred, as solemn, and guarded by as high sanctions as any that is known to the law. And here we may remark, that such legislation, so far from being a hardship to a father, would be a positive gain; in fact, what the late Dr. Ward called "conscience acquitting." As long as it was in his power to do so, a man would feel it was his painful, almost impossible duty to break faith with the woman he had married, and insist on bringing up his children in his own creed. But if the State, dealing an equal justice to all, caring for the woman as well as the man, and insisting on truth, were to hold the father to his bond, his conscience would be acquitted, his word would be kept, the woman's pain would be spared, and to him there might still come something of that human gladness which is born of faithfulness. Although there is no reason, *à priori* or other, for believing that a husband is more likely to belong to the true Church than the wife, it may be well that he, as a general rule, should control the religious education of the children, but if he consciously choose to forego his right, and to commit that care to one whose faith is robuster than his own, and if his marriage be the consideration for that contract, it is the barest equity that the State should put it out of his power to prove false, even from the best of intentions.

We have hitherto been assuming that, when a man breaks faith with the woman who has loved and trusted him, it is

always for grave reason and under stress of conscience, but in reality the same thing is done from a thousand different and trivial motives, and sometimes apparently in the mere wantonness of cruelty. A Catholic mother is told that her children's chances in life depend upon their being brought up as members of the Church of England, or is reminded that there are expectations from Protestant relatives, and then the condition of her marriage is cast aside. A change in the law would at any rate make that form of baseness impossible, and so prevent many a woman from feeling that her married life has been built upon falsity.

In taking leave of the subject we have one further remark to offer. The proposed certainty as to the religion of the children may be thought likely to make mixed marriages more common. Even if this were so we must remember that a sure guarantee about religion would strip such marriages of half their evils; but in truth there is little reason to anticipate any such result. Men were ready enough before to give the needed promise—and where there is love there is trust—and where there was trust such a promise was not the less believed because it was without legal sanction. The result of the change will be to make promises outlast illusions.

J. G. COX.

The Bogeys of Provincial Life.

SOCIAL LIABILITY.

THERE is a question which sometimes arises, and which it is not always easy to solve satisfactorily. It is the problem of in how far we are bound by social liabilities to fraternize with uncongenial neighbours. In large towns this question has no existence, or rather it is reversed. Our next-door neighbour in London is our natural enemy by right of his position. Does he not unblushingly subsidize the organ-grinders in spite of letters of remonstrance which might compare favourably with Mrs. Carlyle's most cunningly devised compositions? Do not his children grind our nerves to powder by the help of a schoolroom piano, which is only in tune one afternoon in three months, when it is allowed a few hours' rest to enjoy the unwonted sensation? Next-door neighbours have generally either an alarum clock or a baby which acts equally well in spoiling the morning dream which ought to be sweet. If they possess no such household treasure, they start a cock or a cockatoo. They give dances when we are ill, and leave their houses empty in the autumn for the convenience of tramps, who steal our water-pipes. They build an additional storey, and keep us smothered in lime when we have a wedding in the family, and wish to be particularly smart. They will even try to wile away a cook when we have at length succeeded in teaching her to send up a few things we can eat. On our part we ignore their existence, except when we have a quarrel in hand. We feel not the slightest remorse in hating them with a fiendish fervour, and naturally expect our sentiments to be reciprocated. They have at least a million of people within reach from whom to choose their acquaintances, and we properly refuse to allow propinquity to

have anything to do with our selection of friends. But in the country the situation is entirely changed. To be neighbourly is esteemed a necessary virtue. Unsociability is treated either as an unpardonable eccentricity or a serious social crime.

We remember a charming young bride coming to reside in a midland county. Her husband's estates were much encumbered, so she decided on refusing all dinner invitations, as she wished to reduce the establishment to a point at which entertaining according to the customs of the place would be an impossibility. This decision did not cause her a moment's regret, as she had been staying in the county before her marriage, and knew how little she had really resigned. Her husband had tastes which kept him fully occupied at home, and by giving up county society they could hope to have a few weeks in London or abroad every year. But there is no possible way of conveying, without offence, to any stupid person that to you he is a bore. There is no form of independence which seems to be less easily pardoned by idle people than that any one should be self-supporting with regard to amusement. The happy prudent young couple found themselves practically ostracized. When they chanced to meet their neighbours at church, shopping in the village, at a bazaar or a meet, they were scowled upon as if they had committed some horrible misdemeanour. The bride went to one county ball, where no one but the doctor asked her to dance. It was then ever afterwards given out that she liked only low company and did not care to associate with her superiors. This really wounded her husband, so they shook the paternal dust from their feet and went abroad. Though in a certain sense they did not care for the good opinion of outsiders, still it was depressing to live in an atmosphere of suspicion and dislike, which seemed even to be communicated to the poor people on their estate, for whom they had done much more than their richer neighbours ever thought necessary.

It is true dignity and politeness to help others to go their own way, and a want of real courtesy to show any sign of disapproval when it differs from our own. Sometimes busy people take their work to the country, hoping there to be at peace and to get it completed ; but if their names are sufficiently well known to be what is commonly called celebrated, they had better go under false names, else they will have to refuse to be interrupted with a determination scarcely compatible with courtesy. The choice of a servant who can say "Not at home" in a pleasing but firm manner, and a large placard with the offensive word "engaged" as a background to support her, will be found highly advantageous.

People who have always lived in the country can scarcely comprehend what hard work, particularly literary hard work, really means. They do not understand how a slight interruption will make "a break in the thread," which has to be pieced together again with wasteful and displeasing toil. Those who have never painted do not know what it is to leave a water-colour at a critical point, when a pause means destruction. We think the consciences of those who make their livelihood by their wits need not prick them if they refuse to lay themselves open to the interruptions of thoughtless idlers. People who have important work to do ought to be absolved from all unnecessary calls upon their time, and saved from every needless interruption. On the other hand, we have no sympathy with the mere æsthetic idler who shuts himself up in the sickly atmosphere of a clique, and refuses to have anything to do with his other fellow-creatures beyond the circle of his feeble enthusiasm. This is a mere morbid self-indulgence, which withers the soul and distorts the mind. A misanthropic minor poet took a cottage in the country, bringing with him letters of introduction to several of the residents. His wife, being of a cheerful, sociable disposition, was very glad to be taken pleasant long drives through the beautiful green lanes by the kindly neighbours.

She would otherwise often have had rather a dull time whilst her husband was "mooning around," seeking for inspiration to string together his meaningless verses. The poet did ample justice to the fruit and other good things which were sent as offerings at his shrine, but he steadily refused to be interviewed, so his wife had to go to all social gatherings alone. Seeing that it would much gratify these kind county people to see her bear in his den, she tried secretly to organize an evening "at home," for which she hoped to be able to secure her husband by keeping him in ignorance of his intended fate. Unfortunately, he went into the kitchen, and there saw some shapes of jelly being turned out. He rushed off to the nearest railway station, and demanded a ticket. "Where to, sir?" asked the clerk. "Oh, anywhere," answered the poet ; so the man, knowing who he was, gave him a ticket to a neighbouring village, where he knew there was an hotel. The poet did not return until the day he and his household were to leave. Now, only a suspicion of insanity can make this sort of conduct pardonable.

There are two most important things in the education of children often sadly neglected both by mothers and nurses. One is to encourage them from babyhood to make amusements for themselves, in which they can become thoroughly absorbed without any help from companions. The other is, to teach them always to be ready to leave their own amusements with cheerful alacrity when they are wanted to help in the entertainment of others. These two points, cultivated in childhood, would add infinitely to the pleasure of society. They may seem almost contradictions and incompatible, but it is not really so. It is the combination which makes a happy equilibrium and a vigorous healthy character. It is the little girl most interested in making clothes for her doll who will probably be the most ready to lay it down and spin a humming-top to amuse her baby-brother. Every one must have noticed that if you want a service well and quickly performed, it is to the busiest man of

your acquaintance you go, not to the one who has most leisure. Idle people never have time to help others any more than energy to amuse themselves. It is really idleness which generally causes provincial society to be so depressing and irritating. Whilst we would plead for the emancipation of the really busy workers from all unnecessary ceremonious intercourse, we hold very strongly the opinion that the classes living in the country, with time and money at their command, have serious social liabilities.

There has arisen amongst us, of late years, a large army of what are called "district visitors." It is not necessary here to discuss how far their mission has been beneficial or the reverse. At least the principle is good. The sick and sorrowful, the poor and erring, have a right to look for help. Those with abundance have a duty towards their less fortunate neighbours. Now, while this duty is both amply acknowledged and responded to with regard to paupers, there is a sad shirking of the duty towards those who are not paupers. They need help quite as much, but they are forgotten because they do not ask. It would be curious to calculate what percentage of visits amongst the upper classes are paid out of mere kindness. It would be sadly small, we fear; still fewer would be the people asked to stay on a visit for the same reason. Those who meet with reverses, or who become invalids, receive a good deal of commiseration and kindness at first, but they soon drop out of remembrance when no longer able to contribute to the amusement of their circle. Yet surely it is a social liability, having once formed a friendship, not to let it drop even if it is irksome, when it is a kindness to keep it up. Often, in passing a beautiful place empty because the owners are in London for the season, we have thought what real beneficence there would be in lending a few rooms for a month to some of those dear old "decayed" gentlefolk who are to be found in every country town. They have often in their youth lived in

fine places, and to exchange, if only for a few weeks, the narrow walled garden for the open expanse of a wide park, would add a joy to their lives scarcely possible to imagine. Such thoughtful kindness would no doubt entail a little trouble, but nothing in comparison to that involved in giving one ball. To be neighbourly, in the best sense of the word, no doubt requires a great deal of time and trouble; but Augustus Hare truly says: "Did we duly consider how far the goodness of a single individual may be influential in his neighbourhood, how that influence may be propagated in ever-widening circles, and may ultimately, in no small degree, promote the welfare of his country, it would surely be a great support and strengthening to our weak faltering virtue."

M. J. LOFTIE.

Dress in Merry England.

DRESS, like domestic furniture, is a remarkable key to the existing temper of a nation. The climate, the character and the moral tone of the populace all go to determine their costume. When the land prospers, materials become rich and handsome, and forms grow various and sometimes eccentric: garments are many and easily replaced. When famine and bloodshed have clouded the heart of the State, the fashions become rather utilitarian than beautiful, for folks have graver things to think of than the adorning of the body: garments are few, durable, and long preserved.

Even the tastes and pursuits that are popular find an outward echo in dress, curious enough to trace. In England the changes have been many and marked; as, for instance, when China was opened up, Chinese goods were sold in the markets here, then copied at lower prices, and Chinese taste became "the fashion." When classical learning had become a hobby, people tried to dress, build houses, and talk, *à la classique*. And when a mistaken view of religion taught us that colour, and laughter, and beauty, were evil things, costume became stationary and dull, simple in form and "unbecoming"—trade suffered, and the world went on and left the Puritans behind.

In Chaucer's lifetime (fourteenth century) the Renaissance cannot be said to have begun in England; though as early as that I seem to see signs of its coming in Italy, like the stirring of a giant asleep beneath the grass-grown coverlet of many centuries. I think Chaucer saw the movement too, with his quick, prophetic eye; and he has more than once given us a hint which we can hardly take otherwise (*e.g.*, "Knights' Tale,"

l. 2,126 ; "Assembly of Foules," l. 22). The great revival of art and letters had begun to break some fences of prejudice, but had not yet begun to launch into vagaries. By that date Roman, and even Gallic, influence may be said to have ebbed away, and we had a real English costume for the first time. Before the Conquest, dress here was still classic garb spoilt, when it was not mere barbarous wrappage. The Normans refined the loose *gown* into the close *gunna*, and in Edward III.'s reign we had got free of the fantastic French convulsions of Rufus's day, and our tastes had sobered into considerable beauty. Commerce gave us rich Oriental patterns and ingenious fabrics—velvet, satin, silk, crape, and gauze were all in use, besides all sorts of woollen and linen webs ; there were fine dyes—blue, scarlet, green, murrey, &c. And our native talent gave us most delicate and dainty needleworks, which were worn by men and women alike. Chaucer's "Squire" is described as a perfect walking meadow of fresh flowers—embroideries of blossoms probably on a green ground—a bright, merry boy at the age of dandyism, singing and whistling, just what happy young fellows, scarce yet in love, have never ceased to be.

There was a complete reaction from over-full and flowing garments coming on ; but it had not yet taken too great a hold on the public mind, as it did in the fifteenth century. Men and women were both beginning to cultivate "a myddel smal." The broad but sloping shoulders of the English build were not disfigured by excrescences ; and the curt English lower limbs which, unlike the Greek, are seldom long enough to carry off well great masses of drapery, were rather extensively acknowledged by clinging petticoats in women and tight hose in men.

In England we have always been martyrs to fashion. We assert or deny our natural build at the lightest bidding of an unknown Mentor. Sometimes we will consent to have arms, or waists, or hips, or feet, and sometimes we won't ; now it is the

fashion to exhibit a bust, now we must have a hump, now we must be flat as a sole, and whatever we confess to at all we make too much of—it is our little way.

But the costume of Edward III.'s time was perhaps the most appropriate ever fashionable in England. It was varied without being fantastic, rich without extravagance, elegant without attenuation—all which qualities deteriorated in the next reign, when it *did* grow fantastic, extravagant, and attenuated by turns, and the people "caught it" from the clergy—that is, such clergy as were not themselves dandies.

The ordinary woman's gown was a close-fitting dress with a very small train and close sleeves, the plainness of which was enriched, while the lines of the figure were united and broken alternately, by that clever device, the tippet. This was that strip of coloured cloth like a label, sewn to shoulder or elbow, so quaint, so peculiar to the fourteenth century. The tippet was not an excrescence, but a relic, like the rudimentary fifth-bone in some beasts' feet, and I will not diverge upon it here. The pointed shoes were rights and lefts, the head-dresses small, whether square or round—the forms all adapted to the bulk of the frame and to the requirements of the human figure. Nothing as a rule was *outré*, and to a certain extent sumptuary laws enjoined a wise harmony between the inner and the outer man. Whoso had a good figure could display it; whoso had not might wear a broader gown. There were the full dalmatic for elders, the dainty coat-hardie for young and nimble; barbes and chin-cloths to cover the fallen jaw; tresses unadorned for girls; the warm, becoming hood for the chilly or the bald; dapper caps and proud coronets and veils for others—all in vogue at once. The common men wore a long tunic with a belt about the hips; the hood had a tippet to bind it firmly on the brows. Gay hose were popular. The two sleeves, or the two shoes, or the two legs, often varied from each other a little either in colour or form, a mode thoroughly artistic, however strange to

us now. Married women hid their hair: but girls braided it proudly "a yerde long." Men, unlike those of to-day, were not ashamed to have a little hair upon their heads, and docked it across the brow and below the ear, with a slight turn or curl that probably the barber's art assisted. They were mostly clean-shaven.

Would that "fashions" never opposed or denied the natural lines of the human figure more than in Merry England in the time of Edward III.!

About the time of the Renaissance, it is amusing to observe the extent to which the fashionable studies affected dress and all domestic art. Education had become quite the rage. Education meant the Classics, and everybody wanted to appear as Greek and Roman as possible. Phrygian shapes (which had long lingered in Saxon England) were revived in hat and shoe. Every characteristic of Greek and Roman appearance, fit or unfit, was routed from its grave and tied on to English bodies. We were then, methinks, as wild and indiscriminate in antiquity-hunting for the purposes of dress, as we now are for the purpose of making our houses regular bear-gardens—I beg pardon, museums—of quaint objects.

The square tabs worn by the old Grecian warrior, and his tunic, with its fringes and square neck, were seen about manly and matronly waists all over England as early as Elizabeth's birth. When the hoop came in the Greek *κόλπος* was attached to it—nay, the *κόλπος* was multiplied into two or three, as I showed in my book, the "Art of Decoration." The old sandal, quite unsuited to a cold climate like ours, and objectionable to the shops now that knitted stockings had just been invented, had to be copied in the most ingeniously silly fashion. Henry VIII. had tried to recall one form, with thongs drawn up by a string, and he managed it in the broad slashed shoes,

like calceolaria blossoms—a flower, *nota bene*, which must have been named the “lady’s slipper,” when ladies’ slippers were like it. Elizabeth recalled the sandal, in shoes trimmed to represent it, besides wearing neat copies of the real boots and shoes worn in Greece: for the Greeks did not confine themselves to sandals. She also brought in a high cork heel, which was in use in old Greece to raise women’s stature. The hair was knotted up, as at one time it was knotted in Greece and Syracuse; and a bunchy ornament was often stuck over the brow to increase the resemblance to the gods and goddesses that were being unearthed in Rome.

It is only when we acknowledge that the Tudor dress in England is brimful of hints from the Classics, however caricatured and unbeautiful, that we realize how much was known of Classic habits then. The excavations in and about Rome alone were immense. Ancient dwellings were constantly found, rifled, copied—antiquaries fought—notes and sketches and diagrams were taken on the spot, stored away, mislaid, and then, for various reasons, the vast pits were filled up again, and new streets and districts arose at a still higher level above the wreck. Ancient maps and sketches occasionally turn up in the great Italian libraries, testifying to the cinque-cento knowledge of the ground, since lost, and rediscovered as new with drums and trumpets.

As to dress, I know of no detail of Classic garb, male or female, represented in fresco or in marble, for peace or war, that was not reflected in some sort of way in English dress in the days of the Tudors. The short waist of the woman, the long waist of the soldier, small scarf, big cloak, boot, shoe, sandal, sleeve, skirt, scaly armour, tab, hat, and everything else—absolutely nothing was forgotten, though they often put the fragments together as Leonardo glued frog, bat and bird in a mass and made a monster: yes, a monster horrible enough to frighten Mother Nature! Suffice it to say, that if the

costume of Edward III.'s reign was properly English, that of Henry and Elizabeth was absurdly foreign ; and there never was a time when, both in thought and in art, such strong religious and Christian sentiments were so oddly mixed up with Pagan legends.

This craze passed, but never wholly. The English have often striven by strange fits and starts with a curious earnestness and persistence to get back to classic manners, harking back to the impossible as though there was a latent affinity, in spite of all the opposition of climate and national character, much as the young horse reverts to the zebra, we know not why.

Under the Stuarts, the whalebone erections which had been meant to be so classical were softened into an improved view of classicism, and fashionable portraits showed our fair ancestresses in garments which were nothing if not natural—unclaspt, ungirt, and with locks unconfined. If the Elizabethan costume at its height had been a mere coffin in its elaborate denial of every line of the human figure, Stuart women strove hard to make amends. English dress cannot be said to have become English again until Dutch strictness brought back the whalebone in the reign of William and Mary.

The long close vest of dark cloth which the Merry Monarch put on "solemnly" one day for a caprice—and soon took off again—was the parent of the long, square-cut coats which we chiefly connect with the last century, but which came into common use under William III. The *négligé* style of hair, that looked picturesque enough on a pretty woman at Charles's Court, led to a coarse copy in wigs. With the change in public feeling, and some improvement in morals, Dress was greatly altered, and was rather more decent. Puritan influence had, perhaps, helped to crush the excessive candour of vice, but bright colours and rich materials were not to be banished for ever. "Dost thou think that because thou art virtuous

there shall be no more cakes and ale?" said Sir Toby Belch. Indeed, commerce could not have stood it, and commerce is the pivot of English well-being; and so we find silks and laces and false hair married to straight lines and starch!

Sober William represents, to some extent, a reaction from frivolity to steady rule, in both politics and dress. In that reign the Court gave no encouragement to, and took no notice of, costume. There were, of course, men and women who, being frivolous, liked to be indelicate, as there are in every age and reign. There were others who modified bad or uncomfortable fashions to what seemed to them right and proper, as sensible people have done in all ages. But, generally speaking, English costume at this time was reasonable—and respectable. There were no half-clad goddesses, such as Charles's—no wild vagaries such as Gillray shows us were possible under the Georges—possible, I suppose, for the first and last time in English society. Tight lacing, which had quite gone out for a little while during the vogue of short waists—seen in Hollar's prints and Vandyke's portraits—came in again, as it had come long ago with the first William, by way of France. Madlle. Pantine, mistress of Marshal Saxe, has the credit of setting the pleasing example. And at the time when Anne came to the throne fashionable dress was about as clumsy and uninteresting in form and fabric as it has ever been in this world. It was lumpish, like Caliban; it had lost the quaintness of Dutch manners, and it possessed none of the piquancy of the French. But it was not bad, since it became afterwards so much worse. It did not yet include the Hogarth hoop, caught up at the sides like a half-moon—nor the filthy contents of Georgian "heads"—nor the scandalous exposure of the bust that came a little later. It was only heavy, by reason of "furbelows," clumsy frills, and ill-fitting stiff bodices. Large and formal patterns spread themselves about fair backs and skirts, and half a pattern generally sufficed to make a bodice. A few ladies

affected a soldierly array, with laced coats, cocked hats, and a pretty rapier slung at the left side.

But William III.'s time was not without some few picturesque figures. The period of Rembrandt and Teniers carries with it a wholesome, homely charm ; and, as we see in some of Kneller's portraits, there were possibilities of prettily combining the Rembrandt and the Reynolds styles when the one painter was an old man and the other not yet born.

M. E. HAWEIS.

Reviews and Views.

THE fact that Mr. Robert Browning's "*Jocoseria*" has passed so quickly into a second edition, must needs prove a modification of popular taste, since—obviously to those who have read the book—it does not prove any modification of the poet's manner. Mr. Browning is as close and sudden, he pursues as zigzag a course of mental flight, and puts as many heavy full syllables together—leaving out the articles and other little words which might give elasticity to the verse and a quicker explanation of the meaning—as he ever did. It is to be believed, then, that the public which reads poetry is, more than ever before, inclined to try to understand mental processes in verse.

Mr. Browning indeed has changed so little that in this latest volume we come upon the same persistent thought which spoke so steadfastly, so sanely, yet with so passionate a hope, at the end of "*Fifine*," in older and in later lyrics—where has it not appeared? It is the thought of death, and of the reunion it will bring to a husband and his departed wife, who have so loved on earth that other men and women are held by him who remains to be "strangers." Thus it is that the book begins with a short poem, in which the speaker looks upon the vacant loveliness of Nature with expectant sadness in the absence of her he has lost:—

Wanting is—what?
 Summer redundant,
 Blueness abundant,
 Where is the spot?
 Beamy the world, yet a blank all the
 same—

Framework which waits for a picture
 to frame;
 What of the leafage, what of the
 flower?

Roses embowering with nought they
 embower !
 Come then, complete incompleteness, O
 comer,
 Pant through the blueness, perfect the
 summer.

Breathe but one breath
 Rose-beauty above,
 And all that was death
 Grows life, grows love,
 Grows love !

In these lines most readers—two within our own observation—have stumbled at “complete incompleteness,” taking the first word for an adjective, and wondering what subtlety might be intended. Complete is, however, doubtless a verb. There is obscurity and obscurity, and that which is grammatical is always unfortunate. The more difficult the thought, the more should the grammar be absolute and definite, vigorous, delicate, and precise. But all who assert that Mr. Browning cannot write musically, should be converted by this lovely poem, in which the very rhythm has a restlessness, a heart-beat, a sad and impassioned impatience exquisitely significant.

The same note is struck at the end of the little volume :—

Never the time and the place,
 And the loved one all together !
 This path—how soft to pace !
 This May—what magic weather !
 Where is the loved one's face ?
 In a dream that loved one's face
 meets mine.
 But the house is narrow, the place
 is bleak ;
 Where, outside, rain and wind com-
 bine
 With a furtive ear, if I strive to speak,
 With a hostile eye at my flushing
 cheek,
 With a malice that marks each word,
 each sign.

O enemy sly and serpentine,
 Uncoil thee from the waking man !
 Do I hold the Past
 Thus firm and fast,
 Yet doubt if the Future hold I can ?
 This path so soft to pace shall lead
 Thro' the magic of May to herself
 indeed !
 Or narrow if needs the house must
 be,
 Outside are the storms and strangers;
 we—
 Oh, close, safe, warm sleep I and she,
 —I and she !

He would be a bold critic who should undertake to explain confidently what is the enemy which keeps watch in the wind and rain outside the narrow house where the bereaved one meets his dead in dreams. From the words which follow

immediately—"Do I hold the Past," &c.—we may conclude that the serpent is doubt as to reunion and the joy to come. Such doubt is bidden to uncoil from the "waking man;" and Mr. Browning awake is the most thoroughly awake of all our poets; so many of them bear throughout their day something of the delirium of their dreams! But he is strong and sane in his profoundest mysticism; this characteristic marks his literary personality with great distinctness.

In "Adam, Lilith, and Eve," and "Cristina and Monaldeschi," the poet explores those byways of the human heart which in the course of his literary career have so often charmed his feet away from the great heights. In "Ixion," too—which is the monologue of the tortured king reproaching Zeus for his cruelty and smallness of heart—there are those close and keen dealings with actualities of thought and character for which Mr. Browning is famous. But at the end the lines rise to true sublimity. "Jochanan Hakkadosh," in *tersa rima*, is the *pièce de résistance*. It is full of thought which is sound and sure within the abrupt difficulties of the expression. In "Donald," a knot of young fellows are singing their "Hosanna" to Sport, and declaring its power to keep man from all meanness of heart or conduct,

"Good sportsman means good fellow,
Sound-hearted he to the centre,"

and so forth. To them the narrator recites the story of Donald—how the sportsman and a great red deer met on the ledge of a mountain where there was no turning back for either; how the man solved the problem by lying down perilously on his back so that the deer, "struck intelligent and pacific" by the wonder and peril, stepped over him with light and sensitive feet; how, just before the second hind-foot was lifted in the difficult passage, the traitor, who was "sportsman first, man after," got at his knife, stabbed the stag, grasped its pastern,

and was dragged down to the depth of the precipice—not killed, but so smashed that he “looked like a toast in a tumbler of port-wine soaken.” “Rightly rewarded, Ingrate!” is the narrator’s comment. By the way, in Mr. Browning’s verse we are sorry to see a certain Americanism—a manner of writing “for ever”—which we might have hoped Mr. Calverley had killed :

Forever ! 'Tis a single word.
Our rude forefathers deemed it two ;
Nor am I confident they erred—
Are you ?

The Grosvenor Exhibition is not less interesting than usual. It has not the look of futility which is evident in some exhibitions. Mr. Watts’s studies from the Apocalypse, which would certainly be out of place at Burlington House, would of themselves justify its existence. That great artist has taken his inspiration from words which are generally best left in the vagueness of a mental picture. If an artist touches the Rider on the Pale Horse, he is apt to dispel some vision which we are not inclined to exchange for his picture ; but these four fine studies of the four Riders are so noble and inspired as to reveal and not to wrong the fancy. When the mind is in a purely literary mood it does such great things in its imagination, that it is apt to be utterly impatient of the mere picturesque arts. But Mr. Watts brings the intelligent art of painting up to the level of the intellectual art of literary thought. The Rider on the Pale Horse and his mysterious brethren are animated by no mortal movement and vigour, as they career through the clouds of Judgment ; to their faces the artist has given high beauty and power, and the look and the action of the Rider who sheathes his sword while an illuminated sky crowns his head with fire and colour, are eminently noble. Mr. Watts’s horses are rather wilfully old-masterish.

In his "Haystacks," he has produced an effect of that sunlight which seems to the eye deep in tone through its very intensity.

Mr. Burne Jones's allegory of the "Wheel of Fortune" obviously has, like most of its author's works, much of that spirit of imitation which is as much a sign of weakness as genuine derivation from the past is a sign of strength. The figure of Fortune herself has a Mantegna-like dignity of thought; but the young men whom the realistic allegory of the painter has fastened upon the spikes of his wheel (one of them is about to have his realistic bones and muscles crushed, but is showing only a strictly allegorical degree of emotion) have that family likeness amongst themselves which is so inevitable and so regrettable in Mr. Burne Jones's art. Why does he not carry his reverent study of the early Italians a little further, and reproduce their individualized and separate treatment of the human unit? For he does not generalize man in the fashion of the "grand style," which refuses to recognize the accidents of personal character. He merely repeats himself. The other composition, entitled "The Hours," has the pathos which, in spite of a suspicion of manufacture, this artist compels us to admire and participate in. The "Hours" are not such "sweet and wholesome hours" as Marvell counted on a sundial of flowers; they are figured as women heavy with poppy or mandragora, for some other drowsy syrup, which has at once made their eyes vague towards earth, and their fancies vivid towards a more magical world. They sit in a row and droop. As to the colours in which they are clad, it would be difficult to match them at the Royal Academy for violence and harshness. Mr. Burne Jones has always been particularly infelicitous in his blues, to which he gives a truly repellent cast of cold purple. The first hour of the row wears this colour in its light, and the last in its dark, tone. A

portrait of the little son of Mr. Comyns Carr is so full of sweetness and spirituality that we are almost won to forgive the ignorant-seeming treatment of the hands, which have no construction.

Portraits—improving yearly in the English school—are especially noteworthy. Mr. Richmond's are as various in merit as in manner. Sometimes in a happy mood he produces a dignified and sympathetic work, sometimes he is led into some too manifest effort. Full of charming colour and tone is the erect half-length of Lady Mary Glynne, with its white draperies, and its pale head against the light gold colour of the background. Mr. Collier has gained greatly in pleasantness of execution since the hard and defiantly painted pictures of a year or two ago. His series of three detached portraits, in one frame, of the daughters of Professor Huxley, one of whom is the artist's wife, are among the most complete bits of painting in the Gallery.

Mr. Nettleship takes us out of the complications and subdivisions of human feeling to the single sorrows and large, whole passions of the brute. "Blind" is the picture of an old lion who feels his way unpitied among the stones and thorns of a dreary land ; a pack of jackals are at his heels ; away and above in the rose of a cloudy sunset a great bird of prey is poised with widespread wings awaiting its time. Surrounded by some banality, some affectation, and much over-elaborate feeling, the elementary meaning of this work is very striking. However complicated modern human life may be, it must perforce keep certain simplicities ; for instance, it ends in the absolutely primitive simplicity of death. This being so, we do well to go close, now and then, to that Nature which we cannot escape, and art fulfils a worthy task when it takes us there,

whether through primitive human passion or the still more primitive passion of the beast. Literature may deal with what intricacies it will, but painting is better occupied with things that are whole and original; though in the case of this picture they are sad and tragic things enough. It speaks well for the technical execution when the mere subject of a picture beguiles a critic into so much of comment as we have made upon the motive of Mr. Nettleship's work. It is, of course, a good sign of the power of the subject; but it is also a good sign of the quality of the execution, which, if unworthy, would not allow itself to be so overlooked and postponed.

Of the bad Grosvenor pictures what shall be said? Some of them are bad in an unexpected way, outdoing the prettinesses which used to be committed in Suffolk Street, and are abandoned even there. One artist offends in this way, and does it conspicuously, on the line. Another overpowers us with a nude Venus of almost incredible vulgarity and blatant colour. The figure of Psyche in the same picture is well drawn though unrefined. Two ladies attempt the weeping of the Jews by the waters of Babylon. Both pictures are imitations of imitations; in one the painting is almost *naïvement* hard and untaught; in the other—the better picture—the grass looks like nothing so much as a green wig set awry upon the baldness of the dismal land.

Good places given to good young work should win respect for the Royal Academy this year, and for the disposers of the present exhibition. But the Academicians need to make no apology for themselves while Mr. Frank Holl and Mr. Oules are there to represent them. The work of these two portrait

painters is truly magisterial ; it has passed, as little of even the best modern work ever passes, out of the indefinable sphere of pupilage. In construction and drawing, in power and solidity, the portraits of Mr. Bright, of Canon Carter, of Lord Winmarleigh, by Mr. Holl, and of the late Bishop of Llandaff and the Bishop of Norwich, by Mr. Oules, would do honour to any school. Strongly modern in feeling these truly great works fall short of the immortal portraits of Spain and Italy, only in as much as they do not compass all the nobility of aspect which the portrait art of those countries expressed, which belonged to the times, and which was partly in the subject, and partly in the painter's admiration of high breeding. Not, assuredly, that these masterly portraits are wanting in refinement ; the most that is to be said is that they are not lordly.

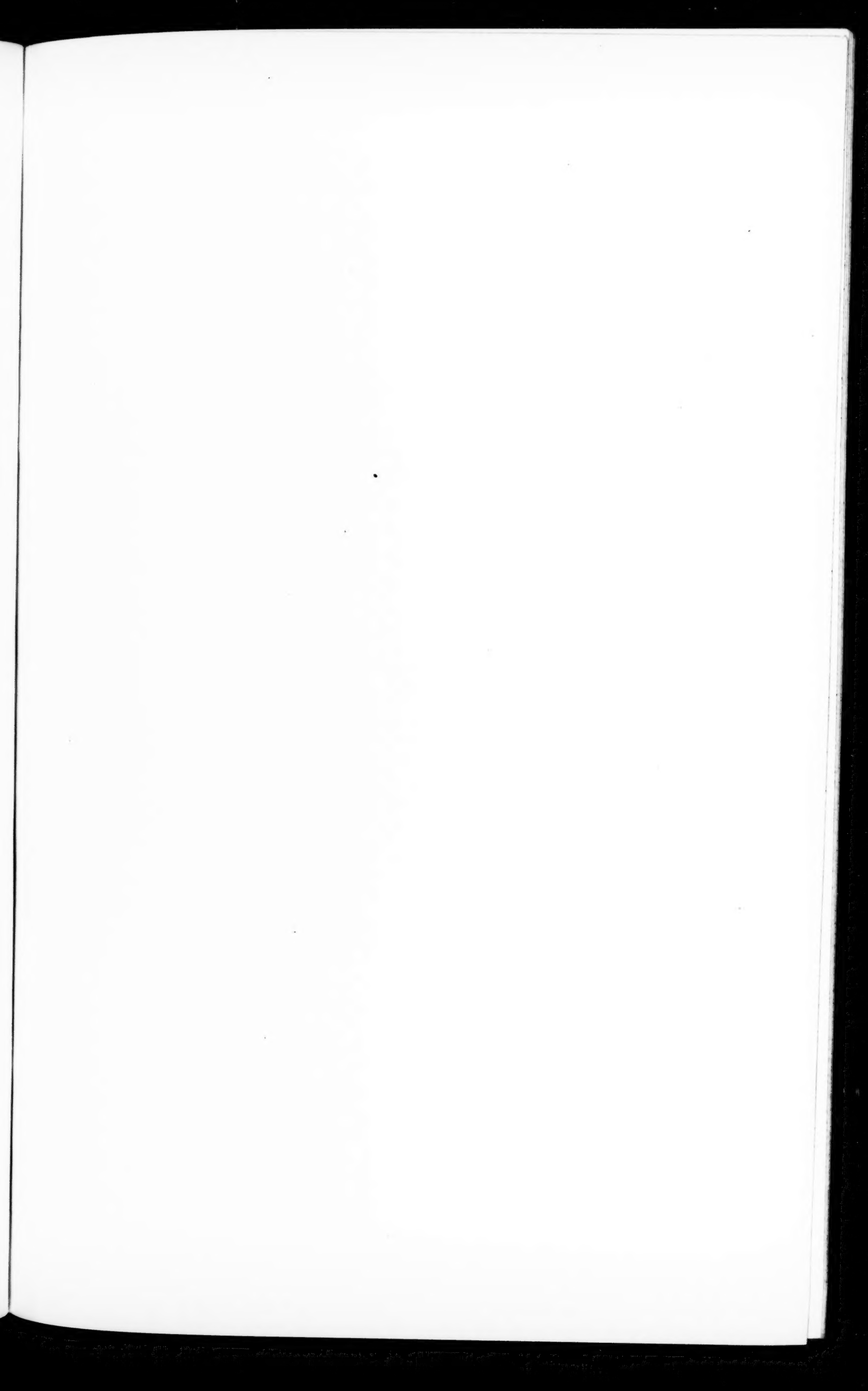
With all deference to the great power of Mr. Millais, we cannot pass over the lack of distinction by which his charming female portrait, "Forget-me-not," is marred. Compare it with M. Fantin's "Etude." There is little doubt as to which picture takes the public mind. Mr. Millais's popular work is as brilliant as a jewel ; M. Fantin paints in black and grey an equally pure, equally unconscious portrait, but he has expressed a creature of dignity and intellect. He gives the world assurance of a woman.

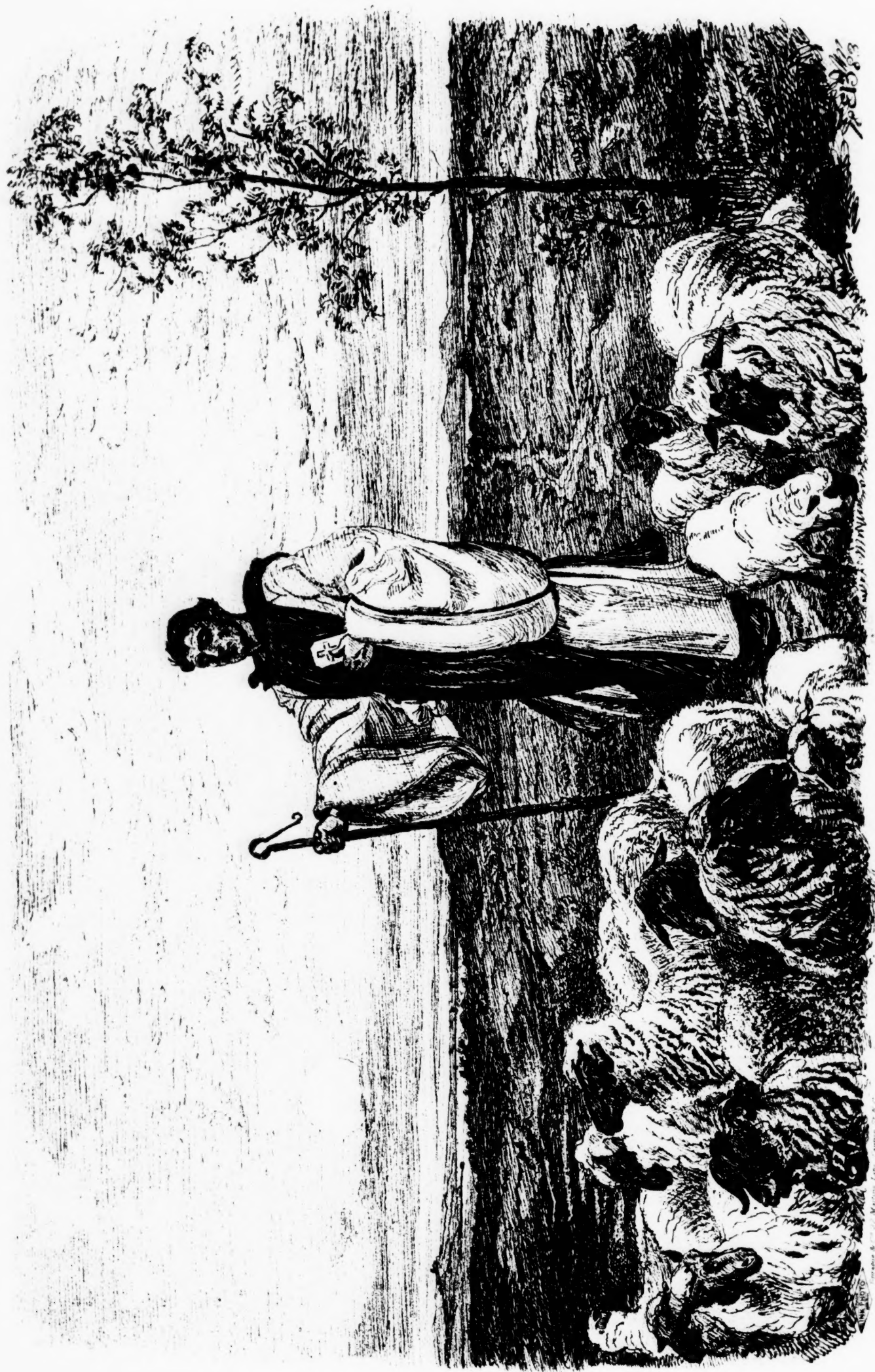
The young work to which we have already referred is of course that of Mr. Van Haanen, Mr. Woods, and Mr. Logs-dail, with that of two or three other painters, who have formed their manner, if not under quite the same influences, yet under the teaching of foreign schools. Mr. Logs-dail, who made a considerable reputation by his careful studies of out-door tone

and of the effect of light on surfaces, has suddenly passed into a phase of the most brilliant accomplishment of manner. If there is any sensation picture in this year's quiet Academy it is his "Piazza," a scene thronged with Venetian life as it is, and by no means as amiable conventionalists feign it to be, or even as we could wish it to be. This great crowd is individualized with something of the separateness of Nature herself. Near and far—the ladies who are taking coffee and *cau sucrée* to our left, the men who are attending them, the group of idlers "of the people" to our right, the very young Venetian with the too familiar sticking-plaster on his head, the band playing in the extreme distance, the indescribable motley gathering of single and separate creatures—all are, as far as the scale will permit, true as portraits. The execution is "carried off" (for a little of the slang of the Parisian critic must be allowed to the reviewer of Mr. Logsdail) with audacity and surprising vigour. More accomplished work of its kind we have never seen from a young man of some five-and-twenty years. The Belgian Academy hoped great things of its pupil, and assuredly has not been disappointed. Mr. Woods is like Mr. Logsdail—only a little *less so*. His "Preparations for the First Communion" is excessively clever; like the *naturalistes*, of literature, Mr. Woods finds a pleasure in rendering vulgar life with full realism, yet with a distinction on the artist's part, a distinction in his own manner and in his own intelligence, which takes nothing from the coarseness of the thing depicted, but rather accentuates it. In this picture, the girls who are signalling to one another, where they sit sheltered from the priest's eye, are coarse, in a peculiarly Italian and unpleasant way. Mr. Van Haanen is less emphatically dexterous, but he has a far sweeter and fuller touch, a far richer brush, and greater reserve in his completeness. His "Mask Shop in Venice" (for all three artists have painted in the Adriatic city) is a little dark interior, with some long, grotesque carnival

costumes hanging up, an old woman seated, a girl half hiding beyond. It is altogether charming—the girl's little face exquisitely and quietly painted.

In landscape the young work is full of power and intelligence. From the vigorous insularity of Mr. Peter Graham, Mr. MacWhirter, and Mr. Leader, we turn with interest to pictures painted under more generally European examples. Such are those of Mr. Adrian Stokes, Mr. Munn, Mr. John Reid (who is as much a landscape as a figure painter), and three or four more. These artists are especially pleasant to us inasmuch as they supply an antithesis to the indistinction and commonness of so much in this Academy, and in all Academies! We are loth to use a harsher word, especially as we should be obliged to throw it at the heads of Academicians and Associates without respect to official rank. Our own readers, by the way, will take special interest in some names which appear in the catalogue, and to which our pages owe, and will owe, much. Mr. Pownoll Williams is represented by a refined "Grey Day on the Lago Maggiore," but his lovely drawing of Roses at the Institute in Piccadilly is his principal exhibited work this year, and should "make epoch" in water-colour art. Mr. Tristram Ellis has two brilliant Egyptian drawings on the line at the Academy and the Grosvenor.





A CISTERCIAN SHEPHERD.